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INNES OF BLAIRAVON.

VOL. III.



INNES OF BLAIRAVON

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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INNES OF BLAIRAVON.

CHAPTER I.

‘ He is gone on the mountain,
 He is lost to the forest,
Like a summer-dried fountain
 When our need was the sorest.’

‘ THIS is curious,’ said Sir George Anstruther, as he turned over the letters before breakfast at Ardarrochar on the morning of the 13th.

‘ What is curious, dear?’ said Amy.

‘ I sent the dog-cart to meet the 7.30, and Allan was not there, and there is no letter or telegram from him to say why he has not come. It isn’t like him at all.’

Mrs. Innes came in at this point.

‘Has Allan come, George?’

‘No, mother, he hasn’t, and he hasn’t written to say why.’

‘I hope nothing has happened to him?’

‘Oh, no, nothing has happened to him. We shall have a telegram to-day to say why he has not come.’

The two remaining conspirators for restoring Allan to Blairavon, Lady Grizel and General Ainslie, appeared soon after Mrs. Innes, and were not only disappointed, but inclined to be angry, because Allan had not turned up. The general had secretly made up his mind on the previous day to split up the shooting-party if possible and go with Allan, leaving George, Lord Maginnis, who was staying at Ardarrochar, and Jack to go together. Being baffled in his desire, he vented his wrath on Maginnis who laughed good-naturedly at him.

When the men came back from shooting there was still no telegram, and Mrs. Innes

was becoming alarmed. Two more days passed, and George telegraphed to the Croft. He got the following answer :

'Mr. Innes left here morning of the 9th.'

After telegraphing to all possible addresses, and waiting a week, the men in the smoking-room determined to institute a search for him. George asked them, being old friends, to stay on and shoot, while he would go to London and make enquiries. He went up the following day. He first went to the Tavistock Hotel in Covent Garden, knowing that in the old days Allan often used to put up there. Mr. Innes had not stayed in the Tavistock for three years, nor had he, to their knowledge, been inside the hotel. Then George went to the Isthmian Club. 'Yes, Mr. Innes had been there. Did the hall-porter remember the last time he saw him? Very distinctly. Between five and six on the evening of the 13th. He was going down the steps of the club, and met Mr. Ingersoll. Perhaps

the gentleman knew Mr. Ingersoll? George said he knew him very well. They had stood talking on the steps for a few minutes, and then Mr. Innes left, and Mr. Ingersoll had come up the steps of the club looking very grave.'

This was at least something. He had been in London within the week. But where was he now? George was at his wit's end. He did not care to put a detective on the track, in case Allan might be annoyed. He spent two days in useless enquiries, and then he came back to the Isthmian Club again.

'Are you quite sure,' he asked of the hall-porter, 'that it was on the evening of the 13th that you last saw Mr. Innes?'

'Absolutely certain, sir.'

As he was coming out of the club, George met an old Oxford acquaintance, and stopped to talk to him.

'By-the-way,' said the man, 'I met a friend of yours the other day at the Oval,

Innes of Peter's. I thought he was looking very ill.'

'What day was that?'

'Let me see, the afternoon of the 13th it was. I remember, because I had grouse for dinner, and deuced tough they were.'

This gave George a new idea. Perhaps Allan had been taken suddenly ill, and had been taken to a hospital. He made the round of all the hospitals in London, and then he made a much more dismal round among the places where those who are 'Found drowned' are laid. To no purpose. Then he got a list of all the steamers that had sailed from London and Liverpool on the 13th and 14th, and the list of passengers. Among them he saw '*Ross-shire Castle* 6 a.m. 13th (they had not changed the time in the paper). This steamer does not touch at Devonport but sails to the Cape, calling only at Canary (Las Palmas) and St. Helena.'

He spent a weary fortnight in making

enquiries, and then returned to Ardarrochar having effected nothing. He tried to cheer Mrs. Innes by saying that he was sure that Allan would turn up soon, but in his own mind he had a growing fear that he might never see Allan again. The general suggested advertising, and Lord Maginnis a private detective, neither of which suggestions recommended themselves to Mrs. Innes and George.

After another week of suspense, the general announced that he was going to make enquiries at Llanwch.

‘Of course,’ said George, ‘they may know where he has gone.’

The general travelled down to Wales, and presented himself one afternoon at the Croft. He was shown into the same room as Allan had been in.

‘General Ainslie, I believe,’ said Mr. Vivian, glancing at the card in his hand. ‘I see you have written, “On urgent busi-

ness." If I can be of any service to you I am sure I shall be delighted.'

'I am sorry to trouble you, Mr. Vivian, but I believe my grand-nephew was staying here some four weeks ago.'

'To whom do you refer?'

'To Mr. Allan Innes.'

Mr. Vivian froze at once. His face assumed an expression of hatred, and he said,

'I am sorry to say that Mr. Innes was staying in my house. He left on the 9th of August, and I have not seen him since. I hope that I shall never see him or hear of him again.'

'What do you mean, sir?' said the general, his anger rising at Mr. Vivian's tone.

'I mean that Mr. Innes, a beggarly schoolmaster, had the insolence to take advantage of the hospitality which I unwisely showed to him, and to win my

daughter's affection and propose for her hand.'

'And what then, sir?' said the general, whose fingers were twitching nervously.

'I told him I considered it a piece of unwarrantable impertinence, and forbade him to see or speak to my daughter again. I wish you good-evening, General Ainslie.'

'Do you know what you have done, sir?' burst out the general. 'You have driven him to despair. He has left his home, and his aged mother is worn out with grief and—'

Here Mr. Vivian rang the bell and interrupted the general by saying,

'The vagaries of Mr. Innes are of no earthly interest to me. I wish you good-evening, sir.'

'He would have honoured your house and your name by marrying your daughter. If an Innes of Blairavon is not good enough—'

Here a servant entered, and Mr. Vivian

saying calmly, ‘ John, show this gentleman the door,’ turned his back upon the general, who almost ran out of the house, cramming on his hat as he went, and literally foaming at the mouth.

After this the general would not do as an ambassador either of peace or war. He was too excitable.

Now at least they knew the reason of Allan’s disappearance.

To add to the sorrow which already overhung the household, Lady Anstruther, George’s mother, who had been living in the dower-house some four miles away, and who had never recovered the shock of her husband’s death, died. Truly it was a house of woe and sorrow. Lord Maginnis and the general stayed on at Ardarrochar. He did not like to leave them alone. The interest and affection that they had for Allan bound them together, and George had urged them to stay. After Lady Anstruther’s funeral, the all-absorbing topic

of Allan seemed to deaden the sorrow caused by her death.

Lord Maginnis insisted on an advertisement, objections were over-ruled, and George inserted one in all the principal papers in England, Australia, and Canada, and they then waited till December before they took any further step. The advertisement might have meant anything and referred to anybody. Mrs. Innes would have none of a public advertisement, fearing that he might the more thoroughly hide himself.

In December a private detective was engaged who made no discovery whatsoever. He was told that Allan had last been seen in England at six o'clock on the evening of the 13th, so he began his investigation from that time, and not being a thorough man, he produced no result, and the search was given up in despair. Allan Innes had disappeared as completely as if he had vanished into thin air.

Mrs. Innes took to her bed, and it was thought that she would never leave it except for her grave, but when the warm, summer months came round again she rallied. She had made up her mind that Allan was dead, and his name rarely passed her lips. As they had not heard of his death, George and Amy were now as equally certain that he was alive, and were only waiting to put some other means in operation in order to discover his whereabouts. George was under the impression that he would turn up suddenly, after he had got over the first bitterness of his disappointment at the loss of Muriel. To this hope Mrs. Innes tried at times to cling, but as time went on, and no news came, she gave it up.

The general avowed that 'that cold-blooded old villain, Vivian, was at the bottom of it all,' and talked of instituting a case against him in a court of law, calling upon him to deliver Allan up, or

divulge his place of hiding. This was of course absurd, and was pooh-poohed by Lord Maginnis, who was the only really practical man of the lot. He said that the only way to do it was to set several detectives on the trail, and to offer a heavy reward to the man who discovered him. Mrs. Innes said no, because then Allan would appear in the light of a criminal. There is no doubt that, during all this unhappy time, Mrs. Innes behaved very foolishly. Lady Grizel was in despair. She had made up her mind to make over to Allan, by hook or by crook, enough money to allow him to live at Blairavon like his forefathers. The result of all the suggestions, counter-suggestions, wild ideas and propositions, was that nothing was done at all at that time. They finally decided to let matters rest for a time at least, in the hope that Allan would either write or return.

‘ My dear mother,’ said George to Mrs.

Innes, 'I really don't think that you and Lady Grizel ought to be so cast down. You may feel quite assured that nothing bad has happened to Allan: we should have heard long ago of anything of that sort. I am not in the least afraid that he will not soon appear;' and, even as he said it, he had to confess to himself that he sometimes thought he might never see Allan again.

CHAPTER II.

‘They came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.’

MEANWHILE, Allan had sailed peacefully over the ‘silent summer sea.’ For the entire week during which the voyage lasted, not a cloud appeared on the horizon, and he lolled about on his deck-chair doing literally nothing. He scarcely seemed to think even. An expression of settled sadness had come over his face, and as he sat and stared at the blue waters dancing in the sunlight as they scudded by, he found himself wishing that this might go on for ever. He was utterly apathetic. He had no interest in anything in heaven or earth or sea now that the one

object which he alone desired, and had spent two years in making himself believe he could easily do without, was snatched from his grasp. He knew from the first that this must be the result, and he had said, in his folly, ‘After the first wrench I shall never be troubled again.’ He had made his calculations on the hypothesis that the love was all on his side. Now that he knew that the darling of his heart was separated from him for ever, in all probability, unless he could make a sudden fortune, his grief dulled all other perception. The few passengers passed him over and over again in their promenade on the upper deck, but he never spoke or moved save when addressed. One sweet, motherly-looking woman of about forty-five stopped in front of him one day and said,

‘ You seem very much depressed, Mr. Innes. Can I help you in any way? Why don’t you mix with the other passengers?’

It must be dull for you, sitting all alone.'

Allan rose quickly from his chair, took off his cap, and smiled his old sweet smile, and looking at her with his honest grey eyes, thanked her, and said that he did not feel inclined for society just then, and that his trouble was of an entirely private nature.

' Poor fellow !' sighed the lady, who knew intuitively what was the matter, and with a strange lump in his throat Allan sat down in his chair again.

Early in the morning of the seventh day of their voyage out, his bed-room steward knocked at his cabin door, and said,

' Arf after five, sir ; land only ten miles off.'

Allan got up and dressed, and went on deck, and leaned on the rail underneath the bridge, and watched the rapidly approaching island. Soon he was joined by two other passengers.

Brown sterility, uninviting, inhospitable enough it looked.

'Looks rather barren,' said one.

'I have to stay there till next May,' said the other, 'to check the progress of incipient consumption.'

As they came nearer, Allan gave an involuntary shudder at the prospect before him. Immediately in front was a barren, deserted-looking hill, on the top of which a lighthouse appeared. At the foot of the hill there were a few white houses, apparently the port of the place. To the left was a long, low ridge of yellow-looking earth, which Allan afterwards found, to his cost, to be sand. Further to the left the town of Las Palmas nestled at the foot of another series of low, barren-looking hills, shining white and pretty in the early morning sunlight. From Las Palmas the ground seemed to rise gradually until it culminated in a lofty range of mountains in the middle of the island, near the

top of which was a curious excrescence, somewhat resembling an enormous human thumb stuck upright in the ground. Far away in the distance, looming blue, rose the peak of Tenerife. Not a blade of grass to be seen! Not a tree visible, save for a small clump on one side of the town, between it and the port. (He found afterwards that there were at least two very beautiful woods in the island.)

Allan shuddered again, and thought to himself,

‘ This does not look very promising for making my fortune. They call it one of the Islands of the Blessed. Perhaps it is because of its solitude : one’s contemplation could not well be disturbed here, far away from the turmoil and strife of the busy world. I must stay here for a year at least. Who knows? There may be undiscovered wealth here. This “ purblind race of miserable men ” of ours has in all probability overlooked the best in it,

and worried its little soul over what is worthless. But what a place !'

The consumptive man, thinking of green fields, and shady lanes, and sweet-smelling hay in merry England, said aloud to his companion, after gazing in silence for a long time at what was to be his temporary home,

' It is enough to give a man consumption to look at it.'

Allan turned away, and listlessly went down into the saloon and had breakfast. When he came on deck again they were just on the point of dropping anchor, and the ship was surrounded by a crowd of boats filled with Spaniards, dressed in shirts of all colours. In a few minutes a tall, spare man with a grizzled beard came up the ship's side, and seeing Allan, went up to him and asked him if he could point out Mr. Innes to him.

' I am Mr. Innes,' said Allan.

' Ah, my name is Barrington, my son is

in the boat below, you can make each other's acquaintance as you go ashore. I am afraid you will find it rather dull here; but we must try to make it as pleasant as possible for you. Is your luggage ready?"

Allan said yes, so they went off.

When Allan started from England, he had made up his mind to write to his mother and let her know where he had gone, and then he changed it again, and finally as he journeyed away from England he thought that he would write, but when he landed in Canary he changed it for the last time, and decided that he would not write. This last decision arose from the fact that when he arrived at that lotus-eating island, and had been on it some short time, he saw that any idea of making money was out of the question. Canary was as completely crowded out as England, as far as that went. But we are getting on too fast. When Allan landed, the heat was terrible, and as he drove along a dusty,

uninteresting road from the port to the town, his heart sank within him. Could this possibly be the place which people called the Island of the Blessed, the island to which people came in search of health ? The utter dreariness, barrenness, and nakedness of the country was enough to make an invalid worse. Allan was no bodily invalid, and the only medicine which could minister to his disease was to be found on one spot alone on earth, and that spot was the only spot on earth which was forbidden ground to him. On the road he passed many vehicles drawn by the most emaciated broken-kneed horses, mostly covered with sores, and to all appearance in the last stages of decay ; still they covered the ground at a great pace. Your Spaniard is second only to the Red Indian in his absolute want of feeling towards his beast. He will keep it alive, but that is all, and he will work it till the poor animal drops from sheer exhaustion and ill-treatment.

After a fortnight's stay on the island, Allan found that he had come on a fool's errand, and he had to endure a year of it. A whole weary year of his life literally wasted and thrown away. He had come on the condition that he was to stay a year at least, and he could not break his contract. So far as he could see, there was no companion for him of any sort. The society of the island was very limited, and everyone seemed to be entirely wrapped up in his own affairs, all eager in the race for wealth. A feeling of utter languor came over him, he had no desire to do anything. Eating was a necessary evil. The only thing he cared to do was to sit in a chair and dream. He only had four hours' work a day to do with his pupil, and the rest he spent in doing nothing. He found that this languor was not peculiar to himself. The air seemed to affect nearly everyone in the same way. It was an island where one could sit and listen to soft and

dreamy music for ever and ever, fed the while by fair hands with the lovely golden apples which grow there as they grow nowhere else in the world. An island of dreamful ease.

This was the worst possible thing for Allan. It made him brood and brood over his sorrow till his eyes became sunken and his cheeks hollow, and it seemed to him that there was no more joy left in the world.

Mr. Barrington, who was a kind good-hearted man, said to him one day,

‘This won’t do, Innes. I can see very well that you have got some serious trouble, and I don’t want to know what it is, but it won’t do you any good to sit about moping like this. You will get into a horrible state of slackness if you go on in this way.’

So Allan roused himself and took long walks in the hot September afternoons, and over-exerted himself, and brought on

an attack of what is known as Canary fever, a disease very common in Canary; an insidious and peculiarly unpleasant disease. After that, he relapsed into his former method of idling.

‘I know it is utterly dull for you, Innes,’ said Mr. Barrington to him one day, ‘but it may be pleasanter when the season begins in November. It is cooler, and a good many people come out from England for the benefit of their health. I won’t say that they are particularly interesting, as a rule; in fact, the majority of people who come out here are literally offensive. I cannot understand why an Englishman manages to make himself so disgustingly objectionable, on all possible occasions, when he leaves his own country. Were it not for their money, I firmly believe that Englishmen would be forbidden by law to enter any foreign country. They are universally hated wherever they go, but are tolerated as a necessary and lucra-

tive evil. However, a few nice people do come here, and one can very easily know the people one wants to.'

Allan thanked him, and added inwardly that he did not care much if he never saw anyone.

Visitors began to come in twos and threes, and it aroused some sort of interest in him to see if anyone he knew would come out.

November and December passed and half of January, and no one came. At last one afternoon, as he was idling along the Triana, he saw about fifty yards off him the very last person in the world whom he would care to see. Miss Ventry was strolling along with an elderly lady. He looked to the right and wondered if he could escape up the Calle de Mercedes, he looked to the left to Remédios. No, it was hopeless. He must meet her.

' My dear Mr. Innes, who would have dreamed of finding you here? Why

aren't you at Llanwch? Not ill, I hope?"

Allan gasped out,
'Miss Ventry?'

'My aunt, Mr. Innes. Of course *I* am not ill, my aunt wanted me to come out with her; she has rheumatism, and the doctor ordered this place. We have only been here two days, and I am sick of it already; but you are not ill,—why have you left Llanwch?'

'Haven't you heard from—from the Croft?'

'From Miss Vivian? no,' and as she said it the dark eyes assumed a vicious expression.

'I suppose you will be going there this summer?'

'I don't think I shall ever go there again. I had a difference with Miss Vivian, and I left before those dances for which I was going to stop.'

Allan saw that something was wrong,

but he little knew that the quarrel had been about himself.

After he had got over the first shock of disgust at having met Miss Ventry, he found himself to his astonishment feeling rather pleased. She had improved too. Her voice was not so rasping, her face was not so coarse. But then he had no Muriel to compare her with, but only the swarthy Spanish girls, whose beauty is gauged by their obesity alone, at least in the eyes of the Spaniards themselves. Moreover, he could talk to her of Muriel. She had apparently been one of Muriel's most intimate friends. In fact, he found himself actually whistling and smiling to himself as he walked along after he had left her.

This life in Canary was the very worst possible thing for Allan under the circumstances. What he ought to have had was action : to have his body and mind occupied all day long, with no time to brood over days that were beyond recall.

At dinner that night, Allan told Mrs. Barrington, whose life was one long effort to please others, that he had met a lady whom he had known in England. Mrs. Barrington at once offered to call on her and ask her to the house.

Allan was snobbish enough to feel ashamed to acknowledge her as a friend, when he thought of her loudness and coarseness, but after all, he thought to himself, out of England almost anything will pass muster.

Miss Ventry came to dinner, and was handed over to Allan to take in, and it was with a feeling almost of interest that he escorted her. Far different were his feelings on the last occasion on which he had taken her in to dinner. She sang after dinner, and having a rich, alto voice, and a room which suited its calibre, she sang well. She chose that beautiful song of Charles Kingsley's, which occurs, I think, in the 'Water Babies,'

and Allan thought with sadness that 'the days when all was young' would never come back again.

After this, Allan and Miss Ventry saw a great deal of each other; and it was quite obvious, as it had been obvious before, that Miss Ventry would be very glad to stay in the Canary Islands for ever if he would only stay with her. They walked together and rode together: long rides up to the Monte, past Tafira, and away to La Glória or Los Laureles, and once even up to San Mateo. Miss Ventry certainly looked her best on horseback, though a Canary hack hardly shows off an *equestrienne* to perfection. Allan found himself talking to her, as if she had been one of his dearest friends in England. One good thing it did for him, it roused him out of his languor. The utter lassitude of his life previous to her arrival had completely demoralized him, just as he found many of the other Englishmen in the place demoral-

ized. In that soft, delicious air the animal part of man grows apace, but the reasoning part falls, from disuse, slowly into abeyance.

The time wore on. May—and Miss Ventry was still in Las Palmas. June came, and Allan said to her one day,

‘ You must not think me rude, Miss Ventry, if I ask you if you are not going back to England this summer.’

‘ Oh, yes, Mr. Innes, but my aunt does not want to go back until it is real summer, one can never be certain of any fine weather in England now, until the end of July.’

There was a terrible, yearning look in her eyes now whenever she spoke to Allan. Those great brown eyes of hers had seemed to grow larger, and her face to assume a softer expression, since her long association with Allan. She was slowly eating her heart out with passion for a man who was as innocent as an unborn

babe of the real cause of her prolonged stay in the island. He had no thoughts of love, nor, in fact, thoughts at all for anyone but Muriel. He was glad to have Miss Ventry there: she had at least been near Muriel. Perhaps he would not have been so kind to her if he had known of the bitter hunger which was gnawing at her heart.

At last Miss Ventry's aunt announced at the beginning of July that she was going at the end of the following week. The Barringtons, in consequence, arranged a picnic up to Teror in the beautiful woods of Osório. They had at first thought of going to Los Tilos to camp under the magnificent til-trees in one of the most beautiful cañons in the world, or even to Agaete, but they thought that it was too far and too rough for a ladies' expedition.

Miss Ventry and Allan were going to ride, the others to drive.

'Our last ride together, Mr. Innes,' said

she to Allan the day before the picnic.

‘I suppose it is,’ said Allan. ‘I am afraid it will be a long time before I shall be in England again. I want you to promise me one thing, Miss Ventry, and that is that you will never mention to anyone who is likely to know me that you met me out here. I want to be quite out of sight of all my friends for a time. I have a trouble which I can only get over by losing sight of all my friends in England.’

Miss Ventry promised readily enough. She would willingly have kept Allan from the knowledge of anyone but herself for ever.

CHAPTER III.

'She call'd him lord and liege,
Her seer, her bard, her silver star of eve,
. the one passionate love
Of her whole life.'

IT is needless to say that it was fine. From March to November one can count the days that are not fine in Las Palmas, as a rule, on the fingers of one hand. This particular July day was perfect of its kind. The sky was absolutely cloudless, of a blue that one never sees, but only dreams of, in England; the north-east trade wind was blowing softly in from the sea.

They made an early start, in order to spend the hottest part of the day under

the trees at Osório. Miss Ventry and Allan rode together, some distance behind the carriages. As they passed Tamareceite, the little village on the Arucas road, crowds of half-naked children came out and ran after the carriages, shouting for money in the meaningless way that Spanish children do, crying indifferently for everything from a penny up to a sovereign. One small child, in his anxiety to be first, had crossed his legs and fallen in the dust and lay bellowing loudly. His mother paid no attention to him for some time, but finally strolled out to pick him up, whereupon he responded by kicking her in the face and rolling disconsolately in the dust once more. At the end of the village they came across a *nóvio* serenading his lady-love with a guitar.

‘That’s a very poor way of making love,’ said Allan.

‘Yes, I think our English system is better,’ said Miss Ventry, meaningly.

A Canarian lover has much to put up with. He plays his guitar under his lady-love's window until he gets a crick in his neck for months together, not being allowed so much as to touch her hand, and as to kissing her face—— Horrible thought! However, the system is in vogue, and perhaps they like it. One can hardly picture to oneself an Englishman serenading his lady-love for hours at a stretch on a night in January in England. I don't know, though—a man in love will do most things. Four hours of this amusement is nothing to the Spaniard. He sings cheerily on in a voice that would awaken the dead, making up his own words and his own music as he goes. His mistress's eyebrow receives a good deal of attention, but his assiduity is apt to be annoying to his immediate neighbours who do not happen to be in love.

The road to Teror was not nearly finished, so everybody had to ride for the

last part of the journey. At twelve o'clock they arrived under the great trees at Osório, and luncheon was spread on some stone benches near a spring. After a merry luncheon, during which Allan nearly broke his wrist in attempting to dissect some Canary fowls, some of the more vigorous members of the party went up the Peak of Osório, others went down to see the votive-offerings and vestments in the church at Teror.

Allan was feeling lazy after his long ride, so he and Miss Ventry strolled up into the wood, and sat down on a bank side by side.

‘Our last day together, Mr. Innes. The *Windsor Castle* comes in to-morrow, and then good-bye to Canary. Are you sorry that I am going? I don’t think that I have ever spent such a happy time in my life as the last four months.’

Allan looked at her. Her great brown eyes were shining lustrously. Her face

had become thinner and less coarse, and her skin was slightly tanned by their long rides together in the sun. Her figure had toned down too, and her voice had assumed a softness which was a great contrast to its former tone. Her riding-habit fitted her to perfection. She was leaning on one elbow against the bank, and Allan was sitting opposite to her: with her disengaged hand she was plucking nervously at the scanty brown grass. Allan looked at her and said,

‘Yes, Miss Ventry, I shall be very sorry when you go; you have made the last four months pass very pleasantly for me. If you had not been here I should have spent a very dreary time. I shall always remember this time with pleasure.’

‘I wish I weren’t going,’ said Miss Ventry, pettishly. ‘I should not go at all if that horrid old aunt of mine did not insist on my going with her.’

‘But you surely wouldn’t stay in this

awful place, when you have a nice home in England and friends to welcome you.'

'I don't think this at all an awful place,' answered Miss Ventry. 'The weather is perfect, and I think that every place is pretty well what one makes it, and—and—'

'Well?' said Allan, after a pause.

'And I like it because I have met you here, Mr. Innes.'

Allan smiled and said,

'That is very nice of you, Miss Ventry. I have often thought that I must have been a very dull companion;' and, as he said it, he took her disengaged hand and raised it to his lips, and touched it lightly.

A shiver passed over her frame, and she suddenly turned pale and did not speak for some time.

A terrible struggle was going on in her heart between maidenly modesty and the almost overpowering desire to show her love to Allan. She could see that he was unconscious of it, and she thought that

love was only dormant in his heart, and needed but a spark to make it burst into flame. She knew that Allan had been in love with Muriel, and thought that the reason of his being in Canary was that Muriel had refused him, and now she thought that his heart might be caught on the rebound.

Neither spoke for some time. The breeze just moved the leaves on the tops of the trees, the afternoon air was luscious and drowsy. At last Miss Ventry raised her head and turned her great brown eyes on Allan, and said,

‘But you will come back to England, Mr. Innes.’

Allan said musingly, looking far away into space,

‘I don’t think I shall come back just yet, Miss Ventry—possibly never again.’

Without an instant’s warning she rose to a kneeling position and threw her arms round his neck, and said,

' Oh, my darling Allan, Allan, don't leave me, let me stay with you here, in England, anywhere, only let me be with you. I will do anything for you, I will be anything to you, yes, your mistress if you do not care to marry me. Oh, God, I cannot, will not leave you.'

Just for one fleeting instant when he felt her warm kisses rained upon his cheek, and her heart beating against his own, Allan wavered. Then the image of Muriel with pleading eyes came into his mind, and he gently and kindly disengaged himself from her embrace, saying very quietly,

' You are tired and unstrung after our long ride in the sun.'

She flung herself down on the ground, sobbing bitterly. Then she looked up again with streaming eyes, and said,

' Yes, I have forgotten myself, I have forgotten that I am a woman, and have thought only for my love for you, and I

have asked, and asked in vain, for a man's love. Oh, Allan, you are loved as no human being was ever loved in this dull world before. Think again, my darling, I am not ashamed to ask you. No? Oh, God, I love you—— Stay with me here. I have money; you are poor. I have five hundred a-year. Stay and live in this island, and let us forget all the outer world. See, I implore you on my knees,' and as she said it, she dragged herself to his feet and clasped him by the knees. Allan answered,

‘Miss Ventry, I shall never marry anyone, in all human probability. If I ever do marry, I have already passed my word to marry one and one only. If I break my word to the lady whom I have sworn to love, may God, in His anger, grant me a life of everlasting bitterness and dis-honour in this world, and undying agony in the world to come. I am afraid I give you pain, Miss Ventry. God forgive me if I do.’

She was lying on the ground now, sobbing as though her heart would break. She beat the arid soil with her hands, and at last sobbed out,

‘Kiss me just once, Allan, and say you forgive me.’

‘I have nothing to forgive, Lilian,’ said Allan, as he touched her cheek lightly with his lips. ‘I hear the sound of voices, they are coming up from Teror.’

In a few minutes a merry party came winding through the trees.

‘Oh, how hot it is,’ said Mrs. Barrington. ‘I think you were very wise to stay here in the shade, Miss Ventry; my poor girl, how terribly tired you look.’

Miss Ventry turned a face of mute despair towards Mrs. Barrington, and smiling a wan smile said,

‘Yes, I think our ride in the sun was too much for me this morning.’

On the journey home, Allan and Miss Ventry never spoke a word, and their

silence seemed to infect the rest. Mrs. Barrington saw that something was the matter, but could not understand it. Miss Ventry was to have dined with the Barringtons that night, but she excused herself, and with a hurried farewell went back to her hotel.

After dinner Allan went out to smoke a cigar, and strolled down to the Mole. He passed the watchman, who was sitting under an umbrella. Allan asked him why he had his umbrella up; the man answered that the moon was very strong to-night, and Allan passed on, with a laugh, towards the end of the Mole.

At the extreme end of the Mole he saw the figure of a woman, dressed in white, with a black lace mantilla over her head. She was looking out to sea; the moon shone full on her face, and he could see that it was Miss Ventry. She looked the picture of despair. One hand held the mantilla beneath her chin, and the other

was at her side. The noise of the swell dashing against the rocks prevented her from hearing his approach, so he went behind the signal light and watched her, fearing that she might do something desperate in her agony. She stood perfectly still, gazing out to sea ; every now and then a convulsive sob shook her whole frame. For fully half-an-hour she stood thus ; then, with a low cry of pain, she turned and, bursting into a passion of tears, slowly left the Mole, and walked back into the town. Allan waited till she was well out of sight, and then came out from his hiding-place, and with a sigh strolled slowly homewards, and as he went he muttered to himself,

‘ God help me, I bring nothing but sorrow wherever I go.’

At the Croft, Muriel had spent a weary time of bitterness and sorrow. The days dragged their slow length along in utter

sameness. There seemed to be no end to the long nights in winter, and when summer came it was but little better. Her parents had hemmed her in, and hoped by making her life as dreary as possible to make her forget Allan. They were not unkind. She would have preferred unkindness. She could not bear to be regarded as a naughty child who had committed a crime by falling in love. Absence from Allan merely made her love for him all the stronger, and it was with a sinking heart that she heard that Thomas was going to stay in the house.

‘Why can’t they leave me alone?’ she said to herself. ‘If I may not marry the man I love, I will not marry anyone else.’

Thomas came in June, and made himself as pleasant as it was possible for him to do. Nothing could be more perfect than his manner towards Muriel, it was a mixture of deference and protection which to Muriel was repulsive. The man him-

self was repulsive to her. She could not bear ‘his narrow foxy face.’ Thomas thought that the time had come when he might propose for her hand. He had been told of the affair with Allan, but he thought that that was a mere girlish freak, and, besides, it was nearly a year since he had been heard of: he might be dead. George Anstruther had written to Thomas at Monte Carlo, asking him if he had seen anything of Allan: for George remembered that Allan had a leaning towards gambling. Thomas thus knew that he had disappeared from England.

‘I shall be very glad, Thomas,’ said Mr. Vivian, ‘if Muriel will marry you. At one time, I may tell you frankly, I had higher hopes for her, but now I shall feel honoured in having you for a son-in-law. You have heard of that foolish little episode last summer; but I don’t think that that need deter you in any way. I hope that that folly has been forgotten by this time.’

So it happened that, on the very afternoon on which Allan and Miss Ventry were sitting under the trees at Osório, Thomas proposed to Muriel under the trees at the Croft.

Unluckily for Thomas, they were walking in the identical shrubbery in which Allan and Muriel had walked ten months before. Even before Muriel knew what her admirer was going to say, she had made a mental comparison between the two men very much to the detriment of Evan Thomas.

He was not nervous ; he had too much faith in fifteen thousand a-year and the finest estate in the county of Brecon, to be nervous. He merely said,

‘Miss Vivian, I want you to be my wife, and——’

Before he could say another word, Muriel stopped him and said,

‘I am sorry, Mr. Thomas, but we had better understand one another thoroughly

at once. I shall marry Mr. Innes or nobody. I promised him on this very spot, nearly a year ago : I know that I have never given you the slightest reason to think that I cared for you : I am sorry to give you pain, but I can never marry you.'

'But, Muriel, he hasn't been heard of since the middle of August of last year—he is probably dead.'

'I should know if he were dead,' said Muriel, proudly ; 'and, even if he were, that would not alter my decision.'

'But think what I could give you, Muriel. I have fifteen thousand a-year—I have more—I have twenty thousand. You shall do what you like. I will settle five thousand a-year on you. I will do anything for you, if you will only be my wife.'

'Not if you had all the wealth of the world at your back, Mr. Thomas, would it make one atom of difference to me. I would rather marry the man I love, even

though he were penniless and in disgrace,
than sell myself to a man I cannot love.'

'Are you quite determined, Miss Vivian?'

'I am quite determined, Mr. Thomas.
I am sorry if I have hurt you, but I wanted
to make myself perfectly clear.'

So Thomas left the Croft, but he had made up his mind to try once more. To this end he determined to find out where Allan really was. He went to London and employed a detective, telling him that he could go where he pleased, and spend anything in reason, in search of Allan. If he could prove him dead he should get one thousand pounds over and above his pay, but that he was not to be more than six months over the inquiry.

Curiously enough, Sir George Anstruther and Lord Maginnis had come to the same conclusion about a search for Allan, but they did not offer one thousand pounds to have him proved dead. Their investigation will come to light in a later chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

'Cras ingens iterabimus aequor.'

ALLAN's year in Canary was gradually drawing to its close. At first he thought he would stay on. He had become completely demoralized. All idea of exertion had gradually faded away. He was content for the moment to bask away his life in dreamful ease.

'I will stay one year more : it would be very rough on Barrington if I were to leave his son now. If I leave I don't know what to do. I will have to go back to England, possibly to be a burden on my mother. It would be better to let Muriel forget me : and yet—and yet—'

No, he would make money in some other

way. He would go back to England, and get called to the Bar. You will see that Allan was quite capable of changing his mind. In fact, he never knew for two days together what he wanted. ‘He had heaps of influential friends, and he would make a name soon,’ said he, finally, to himself.

He had told Mr. Barrington that he should stay a year, and at the end of July Mr. Barrington asked him again if he had made up his mind to go.

‘Yes,’ said Allan. ‘I am going back to England. I think I made a mistake in coming here: I have only wasted a year for nothing: I shall go home at the end of August. I am afraid I am putting you out, Mr. Barrington, but you must remember that from the first I was under the impression that the engagement was only for a year.’

‘Yes, I know that I did not make it explicit. I am very sorry you are going, Innes.

Though I am perfectly well aware that the life in this place is the worst thing possible for a young man, still I should have liked you to stay, for my own part.'

'It is very good of you to say so, Mr. Barrington, but to tell you the truth, I came out here on the chance of finding some means of making money fairly fast. I see that that is impossible here, because everything is overcrowded already, just as it is England.'

'I am afraid that there is not much chance of doing anything here,' said Mr. Barrington. 'South Africa is the place at present, but it is a terrible lottery; there are very few winning numbers, most people draw blanks. I know that you are suffering in some way or other, and I do not want to know what it is, but you must have action; you must get to some work which will occupy all your thoughts and all your time, in order to forget your trouble, if you want to forget it.'

Allan thanked him, and when he had gone said to himself,

‘There are very few winning numbers, most people draw blanks. Yes, that’s true enough. I am one of the people who has drawn a blank.’

The month of August wore on, and at last it came to the time when Allan should go. There were no good passenger boats calling at Las Palmas for some time, so he determined to cross over to Tenerife, and catch one of the boats from the Cape.

Among the many people who had been kind to him in Canary were two men called Wright and Batty. They were about his own age. These two men had been at school together, and had not seen each other till one day they met in the streets of Las Palmas, both having come out to enter business houses in the island. They lived together, and their school friendship had ripened into a sort of David and Jonathan affection.

Allan had spent many pleasant evenings in their rooms, and two days before he left, he went to dine with them.

‘We shall miss you terribly when you have gone, Innes,’ said Wright, ‘and I suppose you will forget us when you are back among your friends in England. That’s the worst of making friends out here.’

‘Do you remember Aldridge, Percy,’ said Batty, addressing Wright. ‘We saw a lot of him and he promised all sorts of things, to write to us, to send us this, that, and the other, and after he left we never heard of him again.’

‘I shan’t forget you,’ said Allan. ‘You may be sure of that. Won’t you sing something, Wright? I mayn’t have the chance of hearing you again for some time.’

‘All right, what shall I sing?’

‘Oh, anything you like.’

Wright sat down to the piano and played

in a dreamy sort of way for a time, and then he began to sing very soft and low,
‘I arise from dreams of thee, in the first sweet sleep of night.’

He stopped for a few moments, and then he began again—he had a rich, melodious tenor voice—Lovelace’s song to ‘Althea from Prison :’ and then without stopping he wandered off into ‘Home, sweet Home :’ after that he closed the piano gently and went and leaned with his elbows on the window-sill and gazed out into the street.

None of them spoke for a time, each was wrapped in his own thoughts. Soon, with a deep sigh, Batty rose and went to the window, and putting his arm over Wright’s shoulder leaned out beside him. Allan was left dreaming silently in his chair. He thought, of course, of Muriel. He thought how utterly happy he could be with her in this dreamy island ; but it was not to be.

Presently Wright and Batty came from the window, and Allan said to Wright,

‘ I would give anything to be able to sing like you, Wright. I know of nothing in the world so delightful as to be able to give others such real pleasure as that.’

‘ I used to like singing in England. People said they liked it ; but there is no one to sing to here, and Cecil is sick of my songs, ain’t you, old chap ?’

Batty laughed, and Wright went on,

‘ I would be content to be dumb I think, if I could get some money and leave this the most God-forsaken spot on earth. Three months’ holiday in three years—one twelfth of one’s existence really lived, and eleven twelfths of disgust and discontent in this cursed hole. I am almost indifferent now whether I get a holiday or not. The last time Batty and I went home together, we made all our arrangements for enjoying ourselves ; when we got there we found that everybody had forgotten us, and we had forgotten the way to enjoy ourselves in England. We had fallen com-

pletely out of the run of amusements. I got tired of introducing myself to old friends, and being told that “By Jove I thought you were dead.” The ordinary topics of every-day conversation were as a closed book to us, and we were really glad to sneak back here again, feeling like utter outcasts.’

‘Never mind, old chap, you’ll win the Spanish lottery this year,’ said Batty, in a joking way. ‘Do you know, Innes, that this old fool has taken a ticket each year for five years, worth twenty pounds, and has been quite annoyed because he has not won it.’

At the mention of the lottery, Wright brightened up at once.

‘Yes, by gad, I shall win it this year for a certainty.’

Allan laughed at him.

‘No, I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We’ll each take a third of the ticket. I have no luck. If you two come in, we shall win.’

‘Percy’s mad on that point, Innes. I have tried to laugh him out of it hundreds of times, but it’s no use,’ said Batty.

‘Well, if it will save you any money I’ll take a third of a ticket if Batty will too,’ said Allan.

‘Very well,’ said Batty, ‘but I don’t care much about throwing away six or seven pounds. However, it will prevent this old fool from throwing away his own money.’

‘All right, that’s settled,’ said Wright, gleefully. ‘So you are really going the day after to-morrow, Innes?’

‘Yes. I shall catch the *India* at Santa Cruz. I don’t know what I shall do when I get back. I am not going to do school-mastering any more. If I only had a little capital I should set up a private school, but I haven’t. I am going to borrow some money, I think, and go to the Bar. Good-night, I must go to bed.’

Two days afterwards they were saying good-bye to Allan.

‘ You will write to us occasionally,’ said Batty.

‘ Yes, I will write to you when I get back to England, and am definitely settled, but that may be some time hence.’

‘ What’s your address in England?’

‘ Oh! the Isthmian Club will always find me. Good-bye.’

In five minutes more Allan was rounding the Isleta on his way to Tenerife.

Two days after he had left, a small man with a keen face called on Mr. Barrington.

‘ My name is Foss, sir. I am a private detective. I have been engaged to find Mr. Allan Innes, and I hear in the hotel that he is living in your house.’

Mr. Barrington said that he did not feel inclined to give Mr. Foss any information about Allan until he knew that his errand was a peaceable one.

'There is nothing against him of any sort,' said Mr. Foss, 'my mission is purely philanthropic ;' and at this remarkably neat phrase the little man smacked his lips.

'If that is the case, I may tell you that you are too late. I have a telegram here saying that the *India* started from Tenerife this morning. Mr. Innes left Las Palmas to catch her at Santa Cruz.'

Mr. Foss swore aloud.

'I can give you no further information, sir ; I do not know where he has gone to in England. Good-afternoon.'

This was the detective engaged by Thomas. Sir George Anstruther's man had gone entirely on a wrong scent to Chili. Mr. Foss took the trouble to make inquiries at all the principal shipping-offices as to ships that started before the 13th of August, 1888, saying to himself that he was not going to trust the word of a hall-porter. Thomas had told him all the particulars he knew. So he went to the

London offices first, and at the end of a week he presented himself at Currie's offices, and asked for a passenger list for the whole month of August in the previous year. With a cry of delight he saw '*Ross-shire Castle*, sailed 3 p.m., 13th,' and among the passengers the name of Allan Innes for Las Palmas. His previous inquiries had occupied him some time, so that it was not till the last week in August that he had started for Las Palmas.

Meanwhile, Allan had reached Santa Cruz, and put up at Camacho's Hotel. The following morning it was insufferably hot. He went round to the offices of the *India* agents, and was told that the ship was not expected till next morning. He went back to the hotel.

'How on earth am I to get through a day in this awful hole?' he said to himself.

He went and saw the English colours that had been taken in the attack on Tene-

rife by Nelson, and then he strolled down to the Mole. At last he said,

‘I must get some air, I am choked in this stuffy town. Las Palmas is Elysium to this place.’

He ordered a carriage and drove up the long, dusty hill to Laguna. The Mercedes looked cool and tempting in the distance, but he did not feel inclined for exercise, so he stayed in the hotel at Laguna, had lunch, saw the churches, and then thought to himself that perhaps the *India* might come in in the evening. He had his carriage out at once, and drove down again. As he came over the crest of the hill and got a view of the sea, he saw a magnificent steamer coming in from the north.

‘What ship is that?’ he asked of the coachman.

The coachman was not sure, but he thought from its size it must be one of those that go out to Australia.

It has been said that Allan was quite capable of changing his mind.

‘Australia!’ he said to himself, ‘the very thing. I’ll get at the truth about the Black Hawk. I’ll ferret out Reid. I have got one hundred and fifty pounds in notes and gold from Barrington, that will see me through, and, if the worst comes to the worst, I can get something to do in Australia. It isn’t played out yet. There are fortunes to be made there yet.—Hurry up, coachman,’ he said aloud.

The coachman galloped his horses down into Santa Cruz, and went down to the Mole to find out what the great ship was, just dropping anchor in the roads.

‘The *Aguaira*, bound for Melbourne and ports.’

He went up to the shipping-office and took a ticket for Melbourne, and was passing up to the hotel when he met a procession coming from the opposite end

of the town. There were four men carrying something on an improvised litter. As Allan approached, he saw that it was the body of a man.

‘Who is it?’ he asked one of the bearers.

‘Englishman, sir, found drowned on the other side of the town.’

‘Who is he, though?’

‘We don’t know. We have never seen him before. He does not live at Santa Cruz.’

Allan hurried back to the hotel, got his baggage ready as the *Aguaira* only stayed a few hours to coal, wrote a hurried note to the Isthmian Club asking them to forward his letters to Scott’s Hotel in Melbourne, and at seven o’clock in the evening he was slowly steaming out of Santa Cruz roads, bound for the other side of the world.

The death of this young Englishman

caused great excitement in Santa Cruz. There was no clue as to his identity : no letters in his pockets, and his linen was unmarked. The hotels at Orotava and Laguna knew nothing of him. He appeared to have come from nowhere, and to be utterly unknown.

Two days after Allan left Santa Cruz, Mr. Foss appeared at the shipping-office and asked to see the list of passengers on the *India*. A clerk who was idly smoking a cigar over his work handed him the list.

'There's some mistake here, a Mr. Innes sailed by this boat,' said Mr. Foss.

'Aw, do you think so,' said the clerk, 'perhaps you know more about my business than I do. If the man's name isn't there, he did not go by the *India*.'

'But he left Las Palmas to catch her,' said the detective.

'Then he must have missed her,' said the clerk flippantly, and blew rings of smoke up to the ceiling.

‘Now, look here, young man, I won’t have any of your puppy tricks with me. I presume you are here to answer questions civilly, you have forgotten your place, young sir.’

The clerk touched a bell and said,

‘Do you think so?’ and went on blowing rings.

A powerfully-built, tall Spaniard appeared at the door and asked the clerk what he wanted.

‘Remove this person,’ said the clerk.

Mr. Foss did not understand Spanish, but when he found himself in the arms of the huge Spaniard, he discovered that the clerk had ordered his ejection. He wriggled, and kicked, and roared out,

‘You shall pay for this, you insolent young puppy. I am an English detective, and I shall have you up for suppression of evidence.’

At this awful threat, which was mean-

ingless, the clerk was frightened, and said,

‘Stop Paquo, let him down.’

Mr. Foss shook himself, and the clerk said,

‘Are you really a detective?’

‘Yes, I am.’

‘I am very sorry, you should have said so before.’

‘Now you are talking civilly, you wanted a little setting down. Now, young man, I’ll trouble you to show me the list of all the ships that have sailed from this port since the 1st of September and the list of passengers.’

‘The *India* is the only one homeward bound, there are two outward, one to the Cape and one to Australia.’

‘Show me them all.’

When he came to Allan’s name among the passengers on the *Aguaira* he had recourse to some very strong language,

crammed his hat on his head, and left the office hurriedly. At the outer door he ran against the tall Spaniard to whom he growled out a curse, at which the man laughed good-naturedly.

Mr. Foss was very angry. He had no desire, nor indeed intention of going out to Australia, but then there were the thousand pounds to consider. To prove him dead! Yes, that was the point. It might take years to trace him in Australia. So it was in no amiable frame of mind that Mr. Foss went back to his hotel. Three visitors were discussing the tragic death of the young Englishman. Mr. Foss had a happy idea, listened carefully to the conversation, and elicited all the information he wanted. He got up from his chair, and went outside.

‘The very thing,’ he said to himself, ‘with a little imagination I can prove this to be Allan Innes. Nobody will ever know that he has gone to Australia. He left Can-

ary to come to England, and was drowned at Tenerife. Very sad case—very. Excellent. Two hundred pounds pay and one thousand pounds reward for two months' work. Foss, my friend, you are a genius,' and saying this he metaphorically shook himself by the hand.

He stayed a week in Santa Cruz and made absolutely certain that there was no clue to the identification of the young Englishman who was so opportunely drowned. (It was discovered long afterwards that he had been on his way out to New Zealand, and must have fallen overboard immediately on leaving Santa Cruz.) Mr. Foss set sail gaily for England. He had made up a perfectly clear and accurate account of Allan's death, bought a Santa Cruz paper announcing the death of the man unknown, and arrived in England. He posted down to Wales to see Thomas.

‘Have you found him, Foss?’

‘I am sorry to say I have, sir.’

‘ What do you mean by saying you are sorry to say you have ? it means money to you.’

‘ Yes, sir,’ said Foss, with a melancholy face, ‘ but it is sad to earn money in that way.’

‘ Ah, yes. I know all about that. I am anxious to hear.’

Mr. Foss proceeded to give an elaborate description of how he had spent a great deal of time and money and trouble in discovering Allan’s whereabouts, and that unluckily, when he got to Las Palmas, he had just left for England viâ Santa Cruz.

‘ Well, sir, I went to Santa Cruz and examined the passenger lists, and there was no one of that name had sailed for England, and then I heard that a young Englishman had been drowned, so I put two and two together and came to the conclusion that this was Mr. Innes. He was buried by the time I got there, but I made

enquiries through an interpreter, and I learned that he was a tallish young gentleman about twenty-six years old, with brown curly hair and grey eyes, and though they say there was no name on his clothes, nor any letters, one of the men who found him said that he saw the initials A. I. on the handkerchief, but that on the way up from the beach it must have dropped out of his pocket, because there was no handkerchief when he came to the mortuary. It's my belief that the fellow stole it.'

All this was very pretty, but mere invention, except the description of Allan which he naturally knew, having had it carefully impressed upon him by Thomas, previous to his starting.

'Now, sir, I think there can be no possible doubt that that was Mr. Innes. Mr. Innes leaves Las Palmas for England and comes to Santa Cruz,—beastly place Santa Cruz, sir,—and never leaves it again. The day after he arrives, a young gentle-

man is found drowned answering his description in every way. I think I have fairly earned my money.'

' Well, I don't know about that, Foss. It is by no means certain that he is dead, but it answers my purpose well enough. Here is your money.'

Mr. Foss left delighted, and thanked his stars he had such a credulous employer.

Thomas did not believe that Allan was dead. He felt morally certain that Foss had lied, but still he had circumstantial evidence of Allan's death, and that was all he wanted. He proceeded to carry his plans into effect. He prepared a short paragraph to the effect that :

' Our readers will be sorry to hear that Mr. Allan Innes, who was for some time a master at Llanwch Grammar School, was accidentally drowned while bathing at Santa Cruz Tenerife, in the Canary Islands. Mr. Innes made many friends during his residence at Llanwch, and his

loss will be acutely felt by many people in that town.'

He inserted this in a small local paper, which was rarely seen out of the county, never out of Wales. He knew that Mr. Vivian took it in, but in order to make 'assurance double sure,' he sent him a copy with the paragraph marked. Mr. Vivian read it, and gave a sigh of relief. When Muriel was out, he laid it on her dressing-table. He thought that this would put an end to her foolish fancy. He could not realise that she still loved Allan as passionately as ever. He thought that by absence her love would be killed, and now that Allan was dead, she would again be amenable to reason.

Muriel came in from a long ride just in time to dress for dinner. Her bed-room was immediately above her father's study. He heard her door close. Then came a short silence. Then a long, loud, wailing cry, followed by a thud on the floor. Then

all was silence once more. Muriel did not appear at dinner. Her mother sent to ask if she was coming down, and a message came back that Miss Vivian had a headache, and would not come down that night.

Next morning Muriel came sweeping into breakfast dressed in deep mourning (her aunt had died some time before, and she had discontinued wearing mourning only about two months). Her face had a hard, set look, and there was a glitter in her eyes that neither her father nor her mother dared face. She took her seat in silence, and drank a cup of tea, and rising, swept to her room. For days she spoke nothing but the merest commonplaces to her parents, and neither of them dared broach any subject to her. For the time she was convinced in her own mind that her father and mother had morally murdered Allan, and she felt that she could never forgive.

CHAPTER V.

‘True, true till death.’

‘No news from your detective, George?’ said Lady Grizel, who had come up to Ardarrochar for a long stay in the middle of August. ‘I am getting almost hopeless. It is more than a year now since he left. Surely he would have written a line, if only to say that he was alive. It is simply maddening.’

‘I have heard nothing, dear Lady Grizel, since the detective went to Chili, six weeks ago. I ought to have some news soon: I am certain that Allan is not dead, but I am beginning to lose hope, too, that he will ever come back again. You know his

nature. A disappointment in love is just the thing to make him hide himself like a wounded animal. Perhaps, when the first intense bitterness is past, he will come back again: but that which he has suffered will sink very deep into his heart. If he does come back, I think it will be without any warning,' said George.

'It is so particularly unlucky that he should have gone when he did. Everything was opening up clearly in front of him, and now Somerton's cousin is dead, and has left no children, and I can leave my money to whom I choose. If you don't hear from that detective soon, whom I have no faith in, I shall advertise publicly on my own account. Something must be done about Blairavon. If Allan does not appear very soon, we must reinstate Jack, who is a dear, good boy, and make a provision for him in case Allan returns. Oh, George, I love that dear boy Allan, as I never thought I should love anybody. I

wish I were a man ! I am losing all my patience.'

It was a very sad party at Ardarrochar.

Mrs. Innes, although she did her best not to show it, was completely broken up, and looked very frail and spiritless.

General Ainslie had had a severe attack of gout, and was at Homburg, drinking the waters and cursing his fate.

Allan was the one all-absorbing thought. Jack, regardless of the fact that he was heir to Blairavon should Allan not appear, was inconsolable at the loss of him, and implored his mother to advertise openly and publicly for him. On this point Mrs. Innes was firm.

' He would never leave me for ever, Jack, without saying good-bye. He will come in God's good time.'

' Yes ; but, mother, perhaps he does not know that you feel it so much ; and we could let him know in an advertisement that you are breaking your heart for him.'

The days dragged on, and no news of Allan came. Even George, who was of a thoroughly placid nature, began to get restless. He was angry with the detective, and he was even becoming short-tempered with his servants.

The sad party finally broke up. Lady Grizel had gone to her own place in Cheshire. Jack had gone back to his work : Mrs. Innes stayed on. She had been at Ardarrochar all the summer, and seemed afraid to be alone in Edinburgh, as Jack only came home in the evening, tired. Her one pleasure was in her little grandson. She was never tired of nursing him, and walking out beside him as he rode in his perambulator. George began to fear for her reason : she spoke so rarely now, and seemed content to sit, her hands folded on her knees, gazing vacantly into the fire.

One cold, blustering, wet afternoon in October, George and Amy and Mrs. Innes were having afternoon-tea in the library at

Ardarrochar. Although in the corner of the east wing of the house, it was one of the warmest and cosiest in it, only one small window facing east, and the light coming from the south through two large bay-windows. The rain was falling silently on the lawn in front of the windows, and within all was so silent that the drip, drip, of the rain could be heard as it fell on the flagged courtyard below the library-windows. Far away on the hill, on the other side of the river, the bracken looked brown and dank. It was altogether a sad afternoon. George rose and said,

‘ I don’t mind if I do get soaked, I must go out ; I feel choked indoors to-day.’

Just as he rose a servant came in with a telegram.

George opened it and read it, and then crushed it up in his hand and said ‘ Fudge !’ in a tone of disgust.

‘ What is it, dear ?’ said Amy.

‘ It is from that fool of a detective. He

says that, from information he has received, he has reason to believe that Allan is in the Andaman Islands, and that he will proceed there on receiving instructions. It is useless to go on in this way. You must advertise, mother. I shall take the law into my own hands: I am going to telegraph to the detective to cancel his engagement. Andaman Islands! I wonder he didn't say Siberia or the South Pole.'

George strode out, and went splashing through the rain to recover his temper.

Next morning he was reading through his letters at breakfast when, all of a sudden, he gave a shout of joy.

' My dear George, what is the matter?' said Amy.

' Listen : " Dear sir,—In case you have not heard from Mr. Innes, I can tell you that he has asked me to forward his letters to Scott's Hotel, in Melbourne. He wrote from Tenerife. Yours faithfully, J. Grimes, hall-porter, Isthmian Club." '

Mrs. Innes gave a sort of half-sob, half-cry of joy. Amy jumped up from her chair, and said,

‘Oh, George, is it true?—let me see it. You must go to Australia—you must telegraph to Lady Grizel and the general and Maginnis—we must make Blairavon ready—oh, George, let us do something quick, or I shall go mad.’

George went up to Mrs. Innes, put his arm round her, and kissed her tenderly.

‘My dear mother, we shall have him back at last, and we will see that he doesn’t go away again in a hurry.’

The news was sent to Lady Grizel and the others.

‘I will write to him,’ said Mrs. Innes. ‘He has gone to see after the Black Hawk, and it may take some time. He will come back when I write. I hope he will bring that man Reid to justice.’

Lady Grizel wrote too telling him that

he was to consider himself her heir, as her husband's cousin was dead.

George wrote telling him that Blairavon was only waiting for him to occupy it once more.

Mrs. Innes became once more hopeful and happy, and everything looked rosy again.

But where was Allan ?

Once on board the *Aguaira* new hope sprang up in his heart.

'I wonder why I did not go direct to Australia? I will claim the Black Hawk again and make my fortune.'

He had merely changed his mind again. Some excuse must be made for him. He was completely wrapped up in Muriel, and was ready to catch at any straw which might give him the prospect of winning her.

He touched at Rio and Sydney, and finally in the beginning of October he landed in

Melbourne. He went straight to Scott's Hotel, where he had stayed fourteen years before.

'I won't go after Reid just at present,' he thought. 'I may as well see a little of Melbourne life.'

So he saw a little of Melbourne life, and in seeing it he found that England beyond the seas had learned 'to go the pace,' to put it coarsely, at a somewhat alarming rate. Not that he indulged personally in any of the vices he found so prevalent. He said to himself, 'Time enough to put myself on a level with the beasts when I have lost my self-respect.' He stayed a fortnight at Scott's Hotel, and then he went down to St. Kilda for a week, and back again to Scott's. He left for Castlemaine, telling the people in the hotel that he should be back in two or three weeks, and that, if any letters came for him, they were to keep them till his return, as he was not sure of his address.

From Castlemaine he journeyed on to Fryerstown, where he arrived in the evening.

He found the place changed. There was now an hotel of some dimensions, at which he put up. On his voyage out he had tried to fancy to himself that Reid had practised deliberate fraud, and from long thinking on the matter he had almost come to the conclusion that such was the case: then thinking of his mother's distrust of Reid, and her doubts as to his honesty and brooding on it, he had got it into his head that he should find him revelling in luxury bought by his ill-gotten gains. He would beard him in his own house and bring him to justice, and in a court of law reclaim all the money which ought to have been his father's during the last four years. He framed all sorts of impassioned speeches in his mind as he sat in the hotel after dinner.

On the following morning after breakfast,

he strolled slowly up the hill and turned to the right and went up the road towards his old home, where he expected to find Reid. It seemed deserted. The large white gate was swinging to and fro in the morning breezes ; the fences were broken down, and rabbits were feeding in the long grass under the trees. All the shrubs were straggling and overgrown : the paths and drives evidently had not been touched for years. With a sad heart Allan walked up to the house. The front door stood open, having apparently been burst in. Most of the windows were broken, and the furniture, pictures, and carpets were gone. The only sign of recent life was the ashes of a fire in what had been the drawing-room, and a broken plate, on which lay a piece of bread, green with mould, and some bones : evidently the remnants of the meal of the last tramp who had made the house his lodging for the night. Reid must have left long ago.

He prowled about the house and recalled all the happy days he had spent there. Here was the nursery where he had had so many battles with his nurse : here the pantry where he had frightened Francis nearly out of his wits in later days.

As he mused over the days of his childhood, a shrill voice came from the passage.

‘Now, then, young man, what yer doin’ there?’

Allan turned, and saw a decrepit old hag, with a wrinkled, blotched, evil face, leaning on a stick.

He answered politely that he was looking at the house.

‘Well, yer can’t look at it; if yer want to look at it, ye can look at it from the outside.’

‘But I was born here.’

‘Gammon! I’m caretaker here, and my orders is no one is to come in.’

Allan laughed, and suggested that being

already in the house he might as well stay in.

‘No, yer don’t. My orders is no one is to come in.’

‘But some one has been eating in the drawing-room quite lately.’

‘Oh, I dessay. Must ha’ come in at night. It’s a lonely place o’ nights, so I sleeps down i’ the town.’

‘Who put you here? Mr. Reid?’

‘Never heern tell o’ no Reid,’ said the woman, sulkily. ‘Old Mumper the ox-shneer told me to mind the ’ouse, and give me ’arf-a-crown a week to do it. Arnswerin’ questions don’t come in the ’arf-crown so fur as I know, so you can jist clear out.’

‘But don’t you know where Mr. Reid is?’ said Allan, ostentatiously producing a half-crown.

The half-crown was too much for the old woman. Her eyes glistened with greed, and she lied and called upon an

imagination which was worthy of better things. Putting her apron up to one eye, and ‘fixing’ the half-crown with the other, she said, in a broken voice,

‘ Poor gentleman, he died two year ago in the last ’ouse on the Malmesbury road.’

‘ Are you sure of this?’

‘ S’help me Gawd, it is as true as death.’

Allan had misgivings, but gave her the half-crown, and went sorrowfully out of the house.

He roamed about disconsolately—to the stables, saw the deserted stalls, the broken doors. Everywhere ruin, desolation, decay. Then he went through the stable-yard and into the paddock. There was the tree to which the kangaroo used to be tied, the marks of his chain still on the bark. Out through the paddock into the bush beyond.

He wandered on, scarcely thinking of where he was going; but unconsciously he took the track which led to the Black

Hawk, which lay, clear of the bush, nearly two miles to his left.

As he approached, he saw plainly enough that here too all was desolation.

One solitary figure was sitting disconsolately on a log between the shaft and the specimen-house. Allan walked slowly up, and when he was about fifty yards away the man rose.

Although it was fourteen years since he had seen him, Allan recognized the old Cornishman, Tregea. His hair was now as white as snow, and his form bent and feeble. He took off his hat as Allan came up.

‘ You don’t remember me, Tregea,’ said Allan, pleasantly.

‘ No, that I don’t,’ answered Tregea.

‘ I am Mr. Innes’s son.’

‘ To be sure, to be sure. Now, I remember ye’re like your father when he was younger. You have come, sir, to see the ruins of the finest mine in the whole colony

of Victoria. But I hope your father's well, sir ?'

' He died nearly five years ago, Tregea, after hearing that the Black Hawk had failed.'

' A deary me, and well he might, sir,' said Tregea, as he sat down on the log again, and drew his hand across his eyes. ' Mr. Reid and I have worked on alone at her for nigh upon four years, always hoping to strike gold again, but never a sign of gold have we seen. Do you see that, and that, and that, sir ?' pointing to half-a-dozen or more huge mounds of earth at intervals all over the place. ' Those are all new shafts sunk in the last ten years, to try to strike a new reef. All no use. And I have lost heart now. Mr. Reid, he would have gone on—would have been working now, if he was well. I never see a man work like him, sir, but it was in a hopeless sort of way ; but he has been ill for the last week, and was a bit light in

the head this morning when I left the house. I haven't the heart to go down the shaft by myself.'

'But,' said Allan, in amazement, 'the old woman at the house told me he was dead.'

'No, he's not dead ; he left the house eight year ago now, and went to live in a small one. But now we live together in old Mother Howell's house down at the end of the town. No, he's not dead, perhaps it would be better for him if he was. I wish I was dead ;' and he sighed a bitter sigh. 'I loved this mine, sir : I took a pride in her. I am too old to go anywhere else, and I think it is time that I was gone.'

'I must see Mr. Reid ; come on—now,' said Allan.

He saw that the mine was lost, irretrievably lost. He had come to Australia to no purpose. More time wasted, and Muriel farther off than ever. He wanted to have the story from Reid's own lips, and see if possibly anything had been saved from the

wreck. From old Tregea he could not expect any very lucid information, as he was evidently in his dotage, and could think of nothing save the loss of his idol. He had half a mind to turn back to the house and rate the old woman for lying, but remembered that he had tempted her.

Very slowly the two walked down to the town, Tregea babbling of the greatness of the Black Hawk in the old days. Allan could see many glances of compassion cast at Tregea as they came down the main street of the town.

‘Who’s the old ‘un got with him?’ said one old man to his crony as they sat warming their old bones outside the public-house.

‘Don’t know; looks like what Innes did when he came here thirty year ago. This ‘un ain’t so good-lookin’ though.’

They passed on to the end of the street where it splits into two roads; one going

to Malmesbury, and the other towards Chewton.

They went along the Malmesbury road, and Tregea stopped at a miserable, tumble-down cottage, on the right-hand side. He put his finger on his lip, and gently opened the door and went in, followed by Allan, who turned round to shut the door; and, as he did so, he heard a harsh, woman's voice call out,

' Is that you—you, Tregea, comin' sneakin' in as if yer was ashamed of yourself. Have yer got the money? I told yer this mornin' that if yer didn't bring it by six o'clock to-night you goes out, and out you goes the both of yer into the street as sure as death. I ain't goin' to have no beggars in my 'ouse.'

Tregea coughed, and said,

' There is another gentleman here, Mrs. Howell.'

The woman had delivered her remarks

to Tregea with her back to him, when he came in, as she was engaged in making up a fire in a miserable, battered old grate.

‘ Wot ?’ she cried out, and turned round suddenly.

Allan then looked upon the most repulsive human being he had ever seen in his life. She was a stoutly-made woman of about fifty years of age, with a face utterly brutalized by drink and crime. She had only one eye, and that was inflamed and bloodshot. Her scant grey hair had apparently not been touched by brush or comb for years, and her face, arms, and hands were engrained with dirt. Her nose had been bruised out of all shape, and her mouth, with its coarse, thick lips, was hard and cruel-looking. Her dress was more or less in rags, and it was quite obvious that it was the only garment which she had on. Her feet were encased in an odd pair of carpet slippers, trodden down at the heel.

When she turned round, she had a short iron poker in her hand with which she had been raking out the ashes of yesterday's fire preparatory to lighting a fresh one. She pushed a stray lock of matted hair off her forehead with this weapon, thereby leaving a long grey streak of dirt. After this she used the poker as a pointer to emphasize her remarks. She looked at Allan, and said,

‘Well, what do *you* want? Yer look like that snifterin’ Scripture readin’ feller that came in ‘ere two years ago, and who I sent pretty smart to the right about. I don’t want any of your darned snivellin’ Bible stories ‘ere. There wasn’t many Moll Howells about when they made up that parcel o’ trash.’

Allan explained that he had no connection with that firm, but that he wanted to see Mr. Reid.

‘Oh, ‘e’s in there,’ pointing over her shoulder to an inner room. ‘Now then

you there, Tregea, 'ave you got that money? 'cos if yer 'aven't, out yer goes, and Reid too.'

Tregea began to make some feeble excuse, when the woman said,

'Old yer noise, no whinin' here. If yer 'aven't the money, yer better go an' git it. Six o'clock's the time.'

Allan here intervened, and said that, as a friend of Mr. Reid's, he would lend Tregea the money, and produced his purse.

'How much is it?'

'Board and lodging for a fortnight. Four pun' ten,' screamed Mrs. Howell, her face quivering with greed as she saw Allan's purse with notes and gold.

'But it's only thirty shillings,' mildly interposed Tregea.

'You almighty liar. Four pun' ten if it is a penny,' yelled Mrs. Howell, now positively dancing with excitement.

Allan offered two sovereigns, which she

snatched with a growl just like an animal, and hurriedly left the house.

Then Allan turned to the other room. The room he had been in, so far, was more like a pigsty than anything else. It was simply a mass of dirt and squalor. The room he now entered, despite its bareness and appearance of abject poverty, was cleanly swept and neat. There were two beds in it, the blankets and sheets of which, though old and torn, were clean.

On the bed in the far corner of the room Allan saw the form of a man tossing uneasily from side to side. He went quickly up to the bed and looked on the face, changed and emaciated and flushed with fever, of his father's old friend.

CHAPTER VI.

‘Pallida mors.’

‘Do you know me, Mr. Reid?’

The vacant eyes roamed over the ceiling and the walls of the room, and then, in a low, confidential tone, the sick man said,

‘Not yet, Tregea, not yet;’ and then again, ‘The seam can’t be run out. We shall be rich again, ha! do you see it? Gold, yellow gold! no, no, not yet, Tregea, not yet.’ Then came silence for a time, then a deep sigh, and the voice came almost like the wail of a woman over her dying child, ‘Oh, Dick, Dick, I did it all for the best. Hush, Tregea, don’t lose

heart, my man, not yet. We'll work her round yet. There must be gold in her still. See, see, there, gold, Tregea, gold—we shall be rich again. No. All lost, all lost, and I did my best.'

Allan turned to the old man, and said,

'Has the doctor seen him?'

'No, sir. He's not been well this fortnight past, but he always says it's nothing.'

'Go at once to the best doctor in the town, and tell him to come immediately.'

Tregea left, and Allan sat down to watch by the sick man's bed.

'He must be got out of this hole at once,' he said to himself. 'Poor fellow, fancy his being reduced to this—speculation, I suppose. He must have been worth sixty or seventy thousand pounds.'

Every now and then Reid, who was tossing restlessly on his bed, broke out into cries for Tregea.

It seemed hours since Tregea had left the hut when he returned at last, with a

young doctor, who gave Allan the idea of ability. He bowed to Allan, went up to the bed, examined Reid, took his pulse and his temperature, gave an involuntary little sigh, and turning to Allan said,

‘A relative of yours, Mr.—?’

‘My name is Innes,’ said Allan. ‘No, in no way related.’

‘I am glad of that.’

‘But he was a great friend of my father’s.’

‘Well, he is very ill indeed.’

‘What is it?’ said Allan.

‘Typhoid fever, a very bad case, looks the worst I ever saw, he must have been ill three or four days.’

‘Will he live?’

‘That I cannot say yet. I should think most decidedly not.’

‘But he must be moved from this house.’

‘Impossible, there is nowhere to put him; besides, typhoid is raging here. I

will send down some chloride of lime, and have the other room thoroughly cleaned out.'

'But Mrs. Howell lives in there,' said Tregea.

'Then Mrs. Howell must get out. There is no nurse in this one-horse hole. I will see if I can get one from Castlemaine.'

'Tregea and I will do the nursing,' said Allan.

'Very well, Mrs. Howell must go. Is she that drunken, one-eyed vixen that I have seen about here occasionally?'

Tregea said, 'Yes.'

'Then I insist on her clearing out. He must have absolute quiet,' said the doctor. 'I will send down some ice, if I can get any, and other things, and I will call in again late at night. There is nothing to be done at present.'

They moved Tregea's bed into the outer room, and threw all Mrs. Howell's things out to the back of the house and cleared the room.

Allan took a sleep, as he was going to do the night-nursing. He never thought twice about whether he should stay or not. Of course he should stay. It was as natural for him to stop and nurse Reid, a man against whom he had been led to believe that he ought to harbour all hatred and thoughts of revenge, as it was to take his breakfast. He only thought of two things : he was his father's old friend, and he was in sickness and trouble. That was enough. A very foolish person this Allan in many ways, but with a heart as kind and gentle as a woman's.

The doctor had said that at present there was nothing to be done. They must only wait.

Allan went for a stroll in the cool, evening air, and at nine he came back to relieve Tregea. Beyond giving Reid a cooling drink, and keeping the bed-clothes on his fever-tossed body, there was nothing to do,

and Allan found himself thinking that he was at his wit's end.

By the time that Reid was better, or the doctor's fears were realized, he would just have enough money to take himself back to England—and what then? In front he saw nothing but a blank, dark cloud, with no single ray of sunshine shining through. Wait a little, Allan, wait a little, there are darker days in store for you yet, and then God help you.

At about half-past eleven there was a thud against the outer door of the other room, and then some utterly unintelligible sounds which might have been oaths were heard. Tregea appeared at the door of Reid's bed-room with a scared face, and said,

'Will you come, sir? I am afraid it is Mrs. Howell.'

Another thud against the door.

'This won't do,' said Allan, and he ran out and unbolted the outer door.

Mrs. Howell, who had apparently been leaning against it, fell inwards on to the floor of the room. Where she fell, she lay. Her face was purple with drink, and she refused to move.

‘We can’t leave her here,’ said Allan.
‘She must go to the police-station.’

‘But we can’t carry her, sir,’ said Tregea, ‘she weighs nigh upon twenty stone.’

At this moment the doctor came quickly in.

‘What’s this?’

‘Mrs. Howell,’ said Tregea.

‘Stay with Mr. Reid, Tregea. Will you help me to drag this woman to the police-station, Mr. Innes?’

Mrs. Howell showed no inclination to move, but the doctor, who had small pity for women of her sort, soon got her on her feet. We will spare the reader the torrent of abuse and offensive language which Mrs. Howell let loose on her supporters. It is neither instructive nor edifying. There is

perhaps nothing more revolting in the whole wide world than to see a woman intoxicated, or to hear her use bad language. It is comment enough on the exalted tone of former generations that one of the chief amusements of the young bucks of London was to go and hear the Billingsgate fishwives abuse each other.

It was no easy task for these two men to drag Mrs. Howell to the police-station. She was intoxicated, obese, and, moreover, did not want to be dragged. She preferred sitting in the road. However, Allan, though feeling languid, was still as strong as when he had led Oxford to victory four years before, and the doctor was young and wiry, and not particularly gentle towards his fair burden.

‘Drunk and disorderly,’ he said to the superintendent. ‘Lock her up. She is not to come back to her former lodgings on any consideration whatever. Find out who her landlord is; pay him the rent.’

'Here it is,' interposed Allan. 'And tell him that I will bear the cost of an action if she brings one. She is not under any circumstances to come back to the house. There is a man very ill there, and noise might kill him.'

'Very good, sir. I'll see about it. She's been here many a time before. She rather enjoys a spell in the cells.'

Allan went back with the doctor, who said,

'You must eat good food and take exercise while you are acting as nurse; it would never do for you to get ill, and you must remember that you are not a professional nurse.'

'I'm all right,' said Allan.

Seven weary days and nights the fever ran its course with Reid. For seven nights on end Allan watched with unceasing care by the sick man's bed, waiting in vain to see the 'speculation in his eyes' which came not.

He felt himself getting weak, moreover. He took no pleasure in exercise, which heretofore had been life itself to him.

On the evening of the eighth day the doctor said,

‘To-morrow will decide his fate. His strength is a trifle better to-night. That is something.’

In the early hours of the morning, when Allan was feeling very drowsy, he heard a feeble voice say,

‘Hallo, Dick, I seem to have been ill. You haven’t changed, Dick, since I met you more than thirty years ago—thirty years ago.’

‘Hush, Mr. Reid; the doctor said that, if you woke, you were not to talk.’

Allan saw that his eyes were sane, and that he was no more delirious, but his voice was weak, so weak as scarcely to be heard, sounding as though it came from another world.

‘Must talk, Dick. Am going to die. Come

closer, will you? Meant to have written to you, but I put it off and put it off, hoping against hope. And now you have come to see your old friend die. It is like you, Dick.'

'You must not talk, Mr. Reid.'

'Give me something to drink—my mouth is dry. Doctor or no doctor, I am going to tell you, Dick—and my name is Harry, not Mr. Reid. Feel death in me—I am glad he's come at last. Give me your hand, Dick, old friend—you can trust me, Dick.'

'Yes, Harry,' said Allan, seeing that remonstrance was useless, and calling him by his Christian name, seeing that Reid mistook him for his father.

Feebly and slowly came the words,

'Come a little nearer, Dick. I can't talk loud.'

So Allan sat, hand-in-hand with the dying man, as he gasped out at intervals his disjointed words.

‘Remember when I came to see you in Scotland, Dick?’

Allan nodded.

‘From that moment the Black Hawk began to give out.—Give me a drink, Dick. I came back in a hurry.—No gold for three months.—Sunk a new shaft—thought the Black Hawk inexhaustible—no gold. I ought to have told you, Dick, but I didn’t want to bother you, and was sure we should strike again.—A whole year—no gold. Dismissed half the men, and worked down the old reef—nothing. I bored more shafts, sank the old shaft deeper.—Tried for a cross reef—nothing. For six years night and day, day and night we worked her, for you, Dick, for you—for myself I did not care. I paid you five thousand pounds a-year for six years out of my own savings.—Give me a drink, old man.—The rest went in paying the men and machinery. I should have told you, Dick—I should have told you.’

Weaker and weaker his voice became, and Allan had to bend down over his pillow to hear the words as they came, barely more than a whisper now.

‘At last, no more money left—so I wrote to you—perhaps if I had been more careful in my own expenses, I should have had more money to send to you—for it was all yours, you were my luck.—Then all the men went—let me see, it must be four years ago.—Since then Tregea and I—’ At this moment Tregea peered in at the door, and Allan beckoned him with his hand, and he came and knelt at the other side of the bed. ‘Any luck, Tregea?’ said Reid. Tregea shook his head, and the sick man sighed a weary sigh, and murmured, ‘Always the same, always the same—well, Tregea and I worked her for four years, every day from dawn till sunset—I could not leave her—I loved her, Dick—I was sure there was gold—found enough alluvial gold in the creek-washings to keep us

alive.—But the Hawk, the dear old Hawk, was dead.—Every day down at the old reef or at the new shaft—and I am sick at heart and weary—nothing more for you, Dick, and Kate, a good woman, and little Allan—a merry little rogue was Allan—I sent you thirty thousand pounds, and now I have no more to send, no more to—'

Here he stopped and closed his eyes, and Allan thought he was gone. Soon, however, his lips began to move again; but now he had roamed back forty years, and was, in his dreams, far away in merry England, wandering hand in hand with the dainty lady who had played him false in his youth. His lips moved, but no sound came forth; then a gentle child-like smile spread over his face, and he whispered,

‘I am coming, Annie darling, I am coming now.’

After this he appeared to doze for a few

minutes, with a happy smile upon his lips. Suddenly he rose to a sitting posture, and said, very distinctly, looking longingly at Allan, who was still holding his hand,

‘ You—can—trust—me, Dick ;’ and fell back on to his pillow—dead.

CHAPTER VII.

‘The road to dusty Death.’

WHEN the doctor came in at seven o’clock, he found Allan in the outer room.

‘Well, how is he?’

‘He died half-an-hour ago.’

‘I was afraid of it from the first. Poor fellow! I have known him by sight for the last three years, but have never spoken to him. He never spoke to anybody but the old man Tregea. People began lately to think he was mad. His name was Reid, I know. Who was he, do you know?’

‘He was my father’s partner here, more than thirty years ago. They both became rich, but the mine ceased yielding, and the man who lies dead in there gave all the

money he had saved to my father, and, until I came here and saw him die, I was fool and beast enough to think that he had misappropriated the money. He was one of the noblest men that ever lived. He has lived in the state you found him for nearly ten years, in order that he might save my father from poverty ;' and Allan, utterly worn out with watching and remorse at his own folly, put his head down on the bed and wept.

' This won't do,' said the doctor. ' You will be ill next if you give way like this. We must make arrangements for Reid's funeral.'

They went together into the other room, and found old Tregea, with his hand still clasped in Reid's, gazing into his old master's face. His lips were moving, and he scarcely noticed the entrance of Allan and the doctor.

The doctor looked sharply at Tregea, and said to Allan, in a low tone,

‘He is the next patient, I am afraid.’

Tregea got up from his kneeling posture, and said, in a quavering voice,

‘I have worked with him for thirty-five years, when he was rich and when he was poor, and when we had to fight for our daily bread, and never a hard word did I get from him, though many’s the time I have deserved it. I don’t care much if I die too. The only friend I ever had since I left Redruth.’

There were many to follow Reid to his grave. The coarse miners who had known him in his pride of wealth, and had respected him in his poverty, turned out almost to a man to silently honour the friend who had often helped them in their need.

Tregea, leaning on Allan’s arm, made no effort to check the stream of tears of real sorrow which trickled down his aged cheeks. Poor old man, his body was bent with long working in the mines, and his snow-white hair flowed over his shoulders, his steps

were feeble and tottering, weakened as he was by the dread disease, which had already got its merciless grip upon him.

Allan and he came back to the miserable cottage, and that same night Tregea was raving. Again the doctor came and shook his head.

‘At his age there is very little, if any, hope.’

The day before, Allan had been talking to the doctor about what was to be done with Tregea. He wanted to send him back, if possible, to Cornwall, to let his old bones lie in peace in his native land. He had told the doctor that his own stock of money was running low, and that he could not afford to pay the whole of Tregea’s passage-money.

‘I want him to go second-class,’ said Allan. ‘He can’t go in the steerage now; although the poor old man was low enough in the world now, he had seen better days.’

The doctor said that he was a poor man,

but that he would gladly give Allan a few pounds to help Tregea, and that he thought that there were many miners who had known him formerly who would be glad enough to help him.

The next day he said to Allan,

‘ I am afraid you will not need to trouble about Tregea now, Mr. Innes. It is almost impossible that he should recover. He is very old, and he has the disease, as far as I can see at present, in just as bad a form as poor Reid had. You can’t do all the nursing. I must get some one to help you.’

Allan had to start on another weary time of watching. The doctor had insisted most emphatically on his taking fresh air and exercise for at least an hour-and-a-half every day.

‘ Of course I know perfectly well that you need not stay here at all, unless you like,’ he had said, ‘ but I see that you intend to do so, and I honour you for it,

but there is no necessity to make yourself ill in doing a kindly action.'

In the evening the doctor brought a woman who had told him she had been a nurse in England. If she had been a nurse, she must certainly have graduated under Mrs. Gamp. She brought a fine air of gin into the room with her, and the pockets of her dress were suspiciously capacious.

After the first two or three nights, Allan discovered that she usually kept awake till about two in the morning, but that after that time her potations began to tell. The result was that he had to do the rest of the night-watching as well as all the day-nursing. Still her very presence gave him some relief and time for sleep.

Tregea never once regained consciousness after he first took to his bed, and a fortnight after Reid's death another funeral procession left the little hut.

Allan was glad enough to leave it. He

took his things back to the hotel in the town, and after settling all the accounts of doctor's expenses and funeral expenses, he found that he had only thirty pounds in the world.

'He must go back to Melbourne and get something to do there. I can get into some school or other, or at any rate into an office, and I shall be back in England before the end of next year,' he thought to himself.

This was in the first week of December of the year 1888.

Allan's notions of 'doing something,' as he vaguely termed it, had, so far, merely put him in a worse position than he was in before he left England. He had yet to learn that, unless a man has capital, the only way of 'doing something' is to plod wearily on at the same thing until success, 'with painful steps and slow,' comes at last.

He had thirty pounds and he was thirteen thousand miles away from home.

Thoughts of Blairavon stole over him as he sat in the hotel verandah after dinner, feeling very lazy and weak.

December ! and it was insufferably hot. At home all the leaves would be gone from the trees. The woodcock would be hiding in the bracken on the hillside, and the pheasants would be cowering under the brushwood in the woods. He closed his eyes and saw the old home gleaming grey in the winter sunset. Inside he could see the fire leaping up the broad old chimneys and casting reflections on the oak-panelled walls, and making silver teapot and the cups and saucers glisten ; for he was fancying they were having afternoon tea, and he could see his mother busily pouring it out. Allan was very fond of tea. All wise men are, and many foolish ones too, for that matter. He could see Jack furtively wolfinng the muffins and teacakes, he could almost fancy that he saw the door open and his father come in, tall,

broad, with the glow of health upon his cheeks, and, stooping, gently kiss his wife's cheek. But no, all that was gone for ever. But still day-dreaming was very pleasant. Then he conjured up another picture. This time it was again December, in the dark old library. The setting of the picture was the same, only his mother was not there now, nor his father, nor Jack. On one side of the fire he himself was sitting in a low arm-chair, gazing with eyes full of love at a dainty dame who was making tea, in his mother's place. She had golden hair and the sweetest little mouth in the world, so, at least, Allan thought, and, when she looked up from the tea-tray with a happy smile at Allan, she showed the softest pair of violet eyes that ever made a man's heart leap.

'Muriel,' he whispered softly, and heaved a sigh, a deep sigh from his heart; then he closed his eyes again and pre-

sently slept in his chair, an uneasy sleep filled with horrible dreams and grisly spectres.

Quite late at night he was awakened by a waiter.

‘ Ah, I have been asleep, I don’t feel well, I am cold ; ’ and he shivered.

Next morning the doctor was standing beside his bed watching his fevered face and listening to his confused ravings.

‘ This cursed typhoid fever again. This man will die like the other two.’

CHAPTER VIII.

‘As hunters round a hunted creature draw
The cordon close and closer toward the death.’

TOWARDS the end of December, when no news came of Allan to Ardarrochar, Mrs. Innes began to lose heart utterly once more. Ardarrochar was practically her home now.

‘He *might* have telegraphed,’ she said piteously to George.

‘Perhaps he will come, mother, and take us by surprise. I see a ship left Melbourne on the 23rd of November, and so he might come in her, and be here at the end of the year. You see our letters would not reach him till about the 20th. Perhaps he has written, as telegrams cost a lot of

money, or he might not have been at Melbourne at the time, and—oh, all sorts of things might have happened. But I dare-say he will come upon us by surprise. At any rate in whatever way he may come or at whatever time, he shall have a welcome like a prince.'

To please Mrs. Innes, and in order that she might be helped to forget her disappointment if Allan did not come, an event which George had given up expecting or even hoping for, the party of old friends had assembled once more at Ardarrochar. The general, with a respite from the gout, was trying to infuse some spirit into the party, but he soon gave it up, feeling that he could not bear the strain, and longing in his own heart for the return of the boy whom he had come to love so well. Lady Grizel, Mrs. Innes, and George were undisguisedly dejected. The only person in the party who had any life in him was Lord Maginnis. He too liked Allan, but

there were other nearer and dearer ties which claimed his attention. The general would occasionally burst into laughter at one of the lisping tales of Lord Maginnis, and also would at times pretend the anger which he really used to feel in former days when any political discussion arose. But still there was no denying the fact that the house was insufferably dull, and the general air of sadness had the effect of silencing by degrees even the general and Lord Maginnis. Festivities at Christmas were a mere mockery, but still they were held as usual. Jack came down from Edinburgh for a week, and did not add to the joviality of the party.

Mrs. Innes would probably have been more at ease in her mind had she known definitely that Allan was dead. The uncertainty of it all was preying upon her mind. Two ships had arrived from Melbourne which might have brought him, and hope was almost dead in his mother's heart.

‘ He will never come again, Jack,’ she said.

She truly had had much to bear, her husband’s sudden and unexpected death, and then Allan’s equally sudden and unexpected disappearance. Her nerves were utterly unstrung. She began to lose interest even in Jack and her grandchild.

It struck George that Allan might be too poor to come home. So he immediately and secretly dispatched a draft for two hundred pounds to Melbourne, directing it to Scott’s Hotel, ‘ to wait till called for.’ One day Jack was out ferreting alone with M’Evoy.

‘ Any news of the laird, sir?’

He had always alluded to Allan as the laird, since Richard Innes’s death.

Jack shook his head sorrowfully, and said,

‘ I am afraid not, M’Evoy.’

‘ Why does he no come bock ta his ain, Maister Jock. What’ll he be daein’ in they

furrin pairts? He's far nae use there.
Why does he no come bock ?'

' I wish I knew, M'Evoy. He will come back soon, I hope.'

' I daurna look at the mistress, she is aye greetin' the leelang day, and whiles she does na seem to mind auld Sandy M'Evoy ava. Mon, but I would like fine but that he wad jist come bock agen.'

' So would we all, M'Evoy. He will come some day, I daresay.'

' Mebbe, mebbe, Maister Jock. But what for did he gang awa'? Blairavon's no by wi' it yet. We'll hae a wheen bonny botties* there yet, gin he would jist come bock agen. Mair-r-r-k ! A cock, sir-r-r !!'

Jack gave the woodcock two barrels and missed, so M'Evoy promptly began shouting to his dog, as all wise keepers do in order to avoid showing their disgust at their master's bad shooting, and also to

* I would not like to make any positive assertion as to the meaning of any word of M'Evoy's, but I think, I say I think, that he must mean ' battues ' here.

cover the confusion of the sportsman himself.

‘ Hets, mon, what’re gaun on aboot ?’
This to his dog, and then to Jack. ‘ Dod !
I clean forgot we cam oot tae shoot.
Yon’s a fine bit burra ower i’ the roondel
yonner, sir.’

The rabbits would not bolt at first and Jack was *distrait*, and later when they did bolt, he shot so abominably that he soon gave it up.

‘ It’s no use, M’Evoy, I can’t shoot this afternoon.’

‘ I’ll no be for sayin’ but what ye’re right, Maister Jock. Here, Random. Co’ way here, see—I ken’s the dug chasin’ agen. Waur chasin’, ye wanderin’ divil ye ? Waur chasin’ ? Why div ’e no come tae the whustle ? Ah, ye dour beast, ye dinna heed the whip.’

Jack had looked on with an air of amusement, while M’Evoy administered what he was pleased to call a thrashing to the re-

triever. The dog knew M'Evoy, and was aware, through long experience, that his thrashings were more theoretical than actual; he looked up from the corner of his eyes till M'Evoy had quite finished, then he got up, shook himself, wagged his tail, and followed at his heels.

‘ Ye’ll mebbe be writin’ tae the laird sune, Maister Jock.’

Jack said yes, that he was going to write that very week.

‘ Well then, ye’ll mebbe be so guid as to say that auld M'Evoy wad give his twa een just tae see him back in his ain place at Blairavon.’

‘ I won’t forget your message, M'Evoy.’

‘ Thank ye kindly, sir, and guid necht tae ye.’

‘ I wish he’d come, George, I wish he’d come. I don’t think his mother will last much longer under the strain: she gets such idiotic notions into her head. I want

to see the dear lad, too. I am old and irritable, and I love him. Confound him, what does he mean by making everyone so fond of him? I must see him again before I die.'

'Well, general, you will have an opportunity of doing that any time during the next twenty years.'

'No, no, my boy—I am afraid of my gout. I was very bad before I went to Homburg, and that dunder-headed ass of a doctor does not understand my case, or his own business.'

'Whom do you go to, general?'

'Sir William Jawkins.'

'But, my dear general, he is the most famous man in England.'

'I don't care, he is an ass and a swindler, and I paid him two hundred pounds the other day.'

'But you say you are better, general.'

'Well, what if I am? Is that his fault?'

George laughed, and so did the general.

‘Don’t mind me, my dear boy—I am terribly cut up about Allan. He used to laugh at me when I was rude, too.’

‘Do you think it would be of any use sending a detective to Australia to look for him, general ?

‘No, I don’t. I think that the wisest thing we can do is to let him alone. Poor boy ! poor boy ! he must have been hit very hard by the daughter of that hard-hearted, pompous, cantankerous old cormorant, Vivian.’

‘Now, general, you are getting angry again. I think Mr. Vivian acted in a perfectly natural manner about Allan. He certainly did not know the facts of the case, and judged from the fact of his being a schoolmaster at such a place as Llanwch that he was penniless, and probably beneath him in rank. It was quite natural.’

‘I don’t care, I shall get angry if I like. The very thought of that man makes my blood boil. Who the devil is he that he

should turn up his nose at Allan, who is worth any three men I know rolled into one?' and the general snorted in his rage.

'When he is suffering from a wound of that sort, it is better to let him have it out by himself. I am certain that he will come back some day. The only thing I am afraid of is for his mother. Poor soul, I can't talk to her any more about him.'

'The only thing is, George, that he may be dead, but I hope that that is not so. I feel that I shall see him again.'

But January passed into February, and February into March, and no news of Allan came. Not a line in a letter—not a rumour as to his whereabouts or his death.

At the Croft, Muriel had gone about as though bereft of all feeling. After her first passionate outburst of sorrow at Allan's supposed death, she gave no further sign of any sort, save by the fact that she wore the deepest mourning for a time.

Her calm, pale face never betrayed any sign of emotion of any sort: she rarely smiled, and as rarely spoke, save when addressed. She could not bring herself to regard her parents in the same light as she had done before her lover's death—she considered them indirectly responsible for that event. Her love for them had died, swallowed up in the passion which she had for Allan, and the despair ensuing on the loss of him. In her outward demeanour towards them she showed the same kindliness of nature as formerly, but the tenderness between parent and child was gone. Mr. and Mrs. Vivian were manifestly afraid of her, they had never dared to expostulate with her as to her mourning, and when, at the end of March, she put it off of her own accord, it was with undisguised joy that they saw what she had done.

‘She will come to her senses now,’ said Mr. Vivian to his wife. ‘Thomas is not

the man to be repulsed by one refusal, and, now that fellow Innes is out of the way, she will marry him. He ought to be back in a month or two.'

Muriel's parents had not been unkind to her, except in the one matter which, to her, included everything else.

With many wiles did Mrs. Vivian try to win back the love which she soon felt had been irretrievably estranged. It was indeed in vain. There are some things which can never be forgiven by us little men : Muriel felt that she could do everything but love her parents again.

As summer came round again Thomas, with the swallows, returned from his winter-quarters in the south. He came unexpectedly to the Croft, and was warmly welcomed by the Vivians.

Muriel knew for what he had come, and determined not to give him an opportunity of asking for what she would never give. He looked ill and worn out. He had lived

his life before he was twenty-five, and it was but too evident that consumption had got its grip firmly on him. His cheeks were sunken, and his little eyes unnaturally brilliant and more ferret-like than ever. His complexion was thick and unhealthy, and his small, red moustache looked more insignificant than before. Moreover, he had contracted a stoop which added to his general unpleasantness of appearance. Muriel could not look at him without feelings of sorrow, in which disgust, it must be confessed, had a share.

He came at the beginning of June, and, despite Muriel's vigilance, found many opportunities for *tête-à-tête* interviews with her. But she managed to keep him at a distance.

The day before he left, he asked her to reconsider the answer that she had given him nearly a year ago.

'I know what you would say, Mr. Thomas,' said Muriel, calmly, 'and I have

tried as kindly as I can to show you that nothing would induce me to marry you. I very much doubt if I shall ever marry anyone now.'

'But,' broke in Thomas.

'There is no "but," Mr. Thomas. Please don't interrupt me. You may have thought that, because Mr. Innes is dead, that I would change my mind. I am sorry if I appear unkind and cruel, but you would save me and yourself much pain, if you would never refer to this subject again in any way. I cannot marry you, Mr. Thomas, I want to make myself so clear and distinct on this point that there can be no possible doubt, in any way, of what I mean. If Mr. Innes had been alive I should have married him in God's good time, and now that he is dead, I am almost weary of my life too;' and saying this, she turned with quivering lip and with an imperious wave of the hand to indicate to Thomas that she would be alone, then went quickly into the house.

With an oath Thomas began pacing up and down the walks in the shrubbery.

‘There is no chance. Oh, my darling, how I long for you ! I wonder if I could work old Vivian. I will do anything to get her. I will offer to do anything, to settle seven thousand a year on her. If that cursed fellow Innes had never shown his face in Llanwch, she would have been mine now, mine, ah—— Damn him ! I cannot even get the better of him when he is dead ;’ and he stamped and swore, and knocked the heads off unoffending flowers in his impotent rage. After a time he went into the house to tell Mr. Vivian the result of his interview with Muriel, and to plot and conspire with him.

The next day Thomas left, and from that moment her life became a veritable burden to her. Everything that could possibly be done was done to make her change her mind. Her home, the one place on earth to which everyone looks, or ought to look,

for peace and happiness, was now fast becoming the one place on earth where she thought life impossible, the last place in the world where she could expect to find happiness. She was almost willing to find *any* mode of escape, with the exception of marrying Thomas, from a life which promised nothing but sorrow and persecution.

'How can you ask me, mother,' she had said to Mrs. Vivian, 'to marry a man whom I cannot even respect, much less love?'

'But, my dear Muriel, think of the estate, the finest in the whole county. Your father says, too, that with the money he has, and consequent influence, he could easily get his peerage, if he were only judiciously silent in the Lower House.'

'I don't want to marry his money or his estate. I don't want to be bought. Besides, you know what a reputation he has, and that his health is in a very precarious state.'

‘I know, dear, that he was a little wild when he was younger, but you must not mind that. It is the fashion nowadays, and he has steadied down now.’

‘I won’t marry him. I would rather die than marry him. Yes, fifty times rather die.’

CHAPTER IX.

‘ I am a-weary, a-weary, I would that I were dead.’

‘ HE will live now, unless he has a relapse.’

The doctor was standing by Allan’s bedside in the hotel in Fryerstown, and he said this more to himself than to the nurse who was standing beside him.

‘ I thought I’d pull him through, sir,’ said the nurse, with a self-satisfied smile on her bloated face.

She was the same individual who had ‘helped’ Allan to nurse old Tregea. The doctor did not say anything, but merely looked at her with an expression of contempt, which she took to mean acquiescence.

The crisis had passed. For nearly a

fortnight Allan had been battling against death, and now he lay, weak, thin and emaciated, in a calm sleep.

‘He is very weak,’ said the doctor, ‘and must have incessant care and nourishment. I would not like him to slip through my hands now. You must be very careful.’

‘Trust me for that. Poor dear, he has been cryin’ awful in his dreams for some one, I can’t make out the name, sounds like ‘Mural,—his sister, very like.’

‘No doubt,’ said the doctor, drily, and left the room.

As he walked down the street he said to himself,

‘Now I wonder what brought him out here? His father wouldn’t have had all his money in those mines, surely. A ne’er-do-well, perhaps, and yet he doesn’t look like it. I hope he’ll get over this. I have got to like the fellow, somehow or other.’

Allan did get over it. But what a change

there was in him, when, with the help of the doctor, he first went out on to the verandah, and sat down in a low lounge chair. He laughed at his own weakness : not like that Allan of old Oxford days. He seemed to have grown taller, and his cheeks were sunken and pale. A six weeks beard and moustache did not improve his appearance.

He smiled when he looked in the glass next day and said to the doctor,

‘ I don’t look much like lifting one over the pavilion at Lord’s, doctor.’

‘ Not quite. You’ll be all right in a week or two.’

‘ It is a very curious thing, but I seem to have forgotten all about why I am here. I can’t make it out: I can’t remember anything after leaving Llanwch. What’s the date ?’

‘ It is the 15th of February.’

‘ What year ?’

‘1889,’ answered the doctor.

‘Good heavens! that is eighteen months ago.’

The doctor told him how he had found him nursing Reid, and by degrees he remembered those incidents; but his life in Canary, and his voyage out to Australia, had completely slipped out of his recollection.

The doctor reassured him.

‘All that will come back by degrees, and now all you have got to do is to get strong. You must have some champagne every day for a bit, and you are not to exert yourself in any way. Simply exist until you get some strength back into that gaunt frame.’

Allan was willing enough to idle away the time, because he felt himself incapable of any exertion at all. He allowed his beard and moustache to grow, there was no necessity for cutting them off, and at

the end of March he began to make calculations as to what he could do, now that he was practically penniless in a strange land. After paying his hotel bill he had ten pounds. These he offered to the doctor, saying,

‘I know that it is absurd to offer you a sum as small as this for what you have done for me, but it is all I have.’

‘Pooh, pooh,’ said the doctor, ‘I would not dream of taking it. You can pay me when you are a rich man. I don’t know who you are, or why you are here, but I think I can tell an honest man when I see one. I will trust you to pay me when you can afford it. Even if you never can, I am pleased enough at having pulled you through. You were worse than either Reid or Tregea, and it was only your constitution that saved you.’

Allan could not answer at first, but after a time he said,

‘I will pay you some day, Walker.’

Then he gave the doctor a sketch of his life, omitting, however, his tacit engagement to Muriel.

'The best thing you can do, Innes, is to go straight home again, as soon as ever you possibly can. From what you say, there is a very good chance of making your estate pay, if you farm it. For God's sake, don't stay in this country if you can possibly help it. It is one vast grave of disappointed hopes. Get back if you can. Without capital you are lost, for the days of fortunes are over in Australia. For my part I would rather be a poor man in England than a millionaire out of it.'

Allan said that he had every intention of going back, now that the primary object of his coming had been accomplished, unless he found that he could make money faster there than in England.

'At any rate,' he said, 'I shall easily make money enough to take me home in six months or so.'

He had some idea of selling the machinery of the Black Hawk, but he found that it had already been claimed by the company who had supplied it, as it had not been paid for in full, but for some reason it had not been taken away. Allan pottered about the old workings of the mine, and, despite the doctor's warnings and exhortations, would not go away. He was trying his luck, he said, and the doctor got angry, and told him he deserved no luck if he stayed fooling about a place that had already broken three men's hearts. Allan stayed, however,—this was after he had recovered his strength,—and at first he found a certain amount of gold, just enough to encourage gold fever, and he saw opening up in front of him, as he thought, a royal road to wealth. Of course it was all surface work that he did.

After three or four months real hard work, he found himself in exactly the same position as when he started.

'Walker is right,' he said, 'without capital one can do nothing. I will go to Melbourne, get a place in a school there, and go home at the end of the year, or as soon as I can. I am further off the realization of my hopes now than when I left Llanwch.'

Before leaving Fryerstown he went to visit the graves of Reid and Tregea, and was surprised to find a small marble cross over the grave of each. He asked the doctor about them, and was told that the men who had known them in their prosperity had subscribed and put them up.

Allan said good-bye to the kind-hearted doctor, who was immensely relieved to see him go, as he had taken a strong liking to him, and did not want to see him wasting his life in vain hopes in Australia. He travelled up to Melbourne, where he arrived in the end of July.

He put up at a small hotel near the station, and began to look around him to

see if he had any chance of getting into a school or business house. All of a sudden it struck him that he had no testimonials, they were all with his mother in Edinburgh. He could only apply to the doctor, who knew nothing about him which would be of any service.

With a heart full of misgivings, he made the round of various schools with the same result at all.

They had no doubt as to Mr. Innes's capabilities and character, but without testimonials it was impossible to engage him. One old gentleman alone seemed inclined to engage him and run the risk.

'I like your face, Mr. Innes,' he said, 'but I am afraid it is impossible, yes, quite impossible; if I had only myself to consult I should engage you, but I have others to consider unfortunately.'

It was the same with the business houses. Some of them laughed in his face. Others were polite, but all returned

the same answer. Without a character it was impossible to engage him. ‘Did he know no one to whom he could refer as to character?’ No one. They were very sorry, but there was nothing to be done.

As he passed Scott’s Hotel, he remembered it as the place where he had stayed before going to England with his father and mother, but he did not remember that he had strayed there only seven or eight months ago. This loss of memory worried him considerably, but try as he would, he could not recall the events from the time he parted from Muriel down to his finding himself in Fryerstown.

His position was getting desperate. Day after day, from early morning till sunset, he tramped the streets of Melbourne in search of ‘something to do,’ until he became sick of the very sight of the streets. He could almost tell, before the words were spoken, what particular form the answer was going to take. It

was literally maddening to hear the everlasting no, uttered day after day, and hour after hour.

At last one day he found that he had only one sovereign in the world—twenty shillings between himself and starvation. Think of what you can do with a sovereign. It will keep body and soul together for a week, perhaps two weeks or even three. It will buy eight ‘special’ cigars at the Café Royal. It will buy two bottles of champagne, (not of the very best brand now, though, because of that extra sixpence duty, one and nine-tenths say). It will buy a pair of boots, not a very good pair, but still a pair. You can do heaps of things with a sovereign, if you only try, but it is not much to have between oneself and death by starvation.

How many dozen sovereigns had he thrown away in the old days at Oxford on luncheons and dinners, and trips to

town, and loo, and a hundred other pleasant but unnecessary things.

He had not quite thrown off the effects of his attack of typhoid fever, and he was low and nervous ; in a dangerous state of mental health altogether. He felt himself thinking that he wished he had died of the fever, and so put an end to his useless existence. There was nothing to do, nothing to do ; he might have to beg his bread in a day or two, no, he could not do that. Better to die. He was useless to himself and to everybody else.

In the evening, when the short Australian twilight had deepened into darkness, in the course of his wanderings he found himself on the banks of the Yarra ; foul and slimy it looked, and, as he gazed at it, a terrible thought entered his head, he hardly dared allow it to give itself shape, but it took it of its own accord. He shuddered, and walked hurriedly away

from the river, and then he found that, even against his will, he was retracing his steps to the bank once more. He was useless, it would be better to drown himself. Even if he went home, it would be only to be a burden on his mother.

He began to pace up and down. His purpose grew, he found himself unconsciously repeating some lines he had read in a Greek play at school with reference to putting an end to one's existence as soon as possible, if one had the misfortune to be born. This brought into his mind the merry days at school, ages upon ages ago. Could he be the same Allan who had laughed and dashed about at Lussburgh? What a time it was, one long round of merriment and happiness, and then Blairavon, fishing and shooting : no sorrow or trouble or care. All gone for ever.

Yes, he would drown himself that night. Not yet a while though. It was early.

He would wait till it got a little darker. He continued his walk, sometimes into the streets, sometimes along the river bank. Two or three unfortunate women flitted past him, with bold eager eyes and painted cheeks. To these Allan paid no attention. He was wrapped up in his own thoughts too thoroughly to take any notice of anything or anybody.

He fancied himself more than ‘half in love with easeful death.’ But he was not. He only thought he was. Everything had gone wrong since his father’s death ; since he had been thrown on his own resources. He was a failure in every way. With fond regret he thought of the two happy years at Llanwch, and he had to confess that two such years could never come again. Well, it was worth living after all to have had those two years. That had been the happiest time in his life. Happier than his days at school or Oxford or at Blairavon. Then he had lived. He had known

Muriel ; and now—he sighed and said to himself,

‘ Well, it is better so. When I am dead, she may marry and be happy. I am only a clog on her happiness now. She will forget me when I am dead.’

Arguing thus to himself he almost brought himself to believe that he was acting as a barrier to Muriel’s happiness, thereby casting an utterly unjust imputation on the one person in the world whom, above all others, he would least willingly malign ; not that he ever intentionally maligned anybody, even in thought.

You will see that he was in a very dangerous position. He was alone, literally alone in the most hard-hearted city in the world : harder-hearted than London, because it was newer, and being rich suddenly, had a greater contempt for poverty. There was not one solitary human being to whom he could turn for consolation and help.

Ever since he began to try to get a post in Melbourne and found it impossible, he had begun to ‘see the devil in dark corners.’ He went down and looked at the river again.

‘Yes, it is better so.’

Then he stood gazing at the river for full ten minutes without moving, and with something like an oath he turned away saying,

‘No, I will *not*. I will fight the world yet. I must get this folly out of my head. I am not yet twenty-seven. I have the whole of my life in front of me. Muriel will wait a little for me; my darling, you will wait.’

‘He must have distraction to drive these wicked thoughts out of his head. For nights he had not slept. Music? Yes, the very thing. He had twenty shillings. There must be a concert somewhere in this vast city. It was quite early yet—only a little after eight.’

He walked until he came opposite to an announcement of a grand orchestral concert, prices from half-a-guinea to half-a-crown.

‘I will pay half-a-crown. I have heard no real music for nearly two years.’

He paid his half-a-crown and sat down. The first piece was over, and the second about to begin. A little tuning of the violins, a preliminary scamper up the scale by a ‘celloist, and then the entire orchestra, with half its eyes on the conductor, and the other half on its score, crashed into Saint-Saëns’ ‘Dance of Death.’ With a cry, Allan sprang from his seat and dashed into the street.

‘That piece of all others on this night.’

It was now a mere matter of chance, a very little thing would turn him one way or the other. His head was dizzy. He was nervous and unstrung from long want of sleep.

As he passed through one of the lower

streets of the town, he heard a quarrel going on—oaths and foul language—and he saw that it issued from two men quarrelling under a lamp-post. A little further off was a woman looking on anxiously. All at once there was a sharp cry, something flashed in the light of the lamp, and then one man was left lying on the ground and the other man and the woman made off, to be met by two policemen at the corner of the street, and arrested.

Allan retraced his steps, and went down another by-street; as he passed a public-house, he heard the sounds of more quarrelling. In this quarrel there were many engaged, men and women, and of the lowest order. All of a sudden three men shot out into the street, followed immediately by half-a-dozen others. These overtook the first three, and a scrimmage ensued, during which Allan was treated to the most appalling language he had ever heard in his life. Soon more police-

men came up and arrested this party and marched them off to prison, and Allan came to the conclusion that ‘the poor i’ the loomp is bad.’ He had watched all this fighting, and listened to all this foul language in a stupid sort of way. He could not think properly. It never struck him that he was a far worse criminal than any of those men, by committing such a shameful breach of trust as to think of taking his own life.

Stumbling aimlessly along, by some strange force of attraction he found himself on the banks of the Yarra again.

‘It seems my fate,’ he said to himself. He thought a little longer. All the trouble he had experienced, and all the trouble that loomed ahead of him, came vividly before his mind. He made a mental comparison between life filled with sorrow and a passion destined never to attain its object, and death. Yes, death it must be.

Painless, dreamy death. They had told him long ago that drowning was a pleasant, easy road to death.

Now his mind was thoroughly made up. He muttered a confused sort of prayer to heaven for forgiveness, and walked back about fifteen yards from the bank. He was going to take a run and a jump in order that he might get well into deep water at once. He thought of taking off his coat and boots, but no, they would help him to sink. He buttoned up his coat and was starting to run, with the one word ‘Muriel’ on his lips, when a long, low, wailing cry seemed to come from just behind him. He stopped, and immediately the cry came once more. It was a child’s voice. That was enough for Allan, children were to him sacred. He walked in the direction of the sound, and about twenty yards away he came to a bench, under which lay a little girl, some three

years old, wrapped in nothing but a shawl. She had evidently just awakened out of sleep.

‘What is it, little one?’ said Allan.

‘I want mother,’ lisped the little child.

Allan kissed her, and walked, with her in his arms, until he came to a lamp, trying the while to hush the child’s wailing. When they came to the lamp, the little girl looked up into his face, smiled and nestled in his arms and went to sleep again. He walked on till he found a policeman, and gave her to him, telling him he had found her on the river bank.

‘Ah, I heard her cry,’ said the man, ‘I was just coming to see what it was. Where’s your hat, young man?’

‘I left it down at the river. I am going for it.’

He found his hat. He had been utterly taken out of himself now by finding the little child in trouble, and he looked at the river and said,

‘No, not yet, while there is life there is hope,’ and he retraced his steps to the hotel.

After all, at twenty-seven misery is better than non-existence.

When Allan told me of this episode in his life, which always made him look grave and sad, he looked up and said jokingly, that the reason why he did not drown himself in the Yarra was because it was so disgustingly dirty.

It is incomprehensible why so many people drown themselves in the Thames. Perhaps it is because it is handy. Now, if I ever wanted to commit suicide by drowning, I should choose a pretty, clean, bubbling mountain stream. Into one of its deep, silent pools I should take the fatal plunge, and, lying there in its limpid waters, drink myself to death.

Allan walked briskly back to his hotel and actually found himself whistling. He went to his room and to bed, and slept like a child till it was broad day.

CHAPTER X.

‘ἡ τοι ὁ μὲν σκηριπτόμενος χερσίν τε ποσίν τε λᾶαν ἄνω ὥθεσκε ποτὶ λόφον.’

ON the next morning, after having paid for his bed and breakfast, he had eleven shillings and sixpence. The majority of people have not got eleven and sixpence at the age of twenty-seven, but still it was not a large sum to start the world with in a strange land. He must go lower ; he must swallow his pride ; he must get work of some sort, by some means or other.

He went out to wander in the streets once more. He offered himself as a reporter at the ‘Age’ and ‘Argus’ offices. ‘Could he write shorthand ? No ? Did he

take them for lunatics? No, sir, you can't get much work as a reporter unless you can write shorthand, and pretty quickly too.'

He paced the streets again. What was there to be done? Nobody seemed to want him. He really was apparently useless for everything except schoolmastering, and nobody would take him without testimonials at that.

'This comes of spending three thousand pounds on my education,' he thought to himself. 'They apparently don't appreciate a university degree here.'

More, it was even a point in his disfavour when he said he had been at Oxford. If a man applies for the post of cashier in a fancy-wool warehouse, and has to confess that he is a graduate of Oxford University, people naturally think there is something materially wrong.

If it came to the very worst, he could at least break stones. There were many men of higher rank than him, who were break-

ing stones in Australia. But it had not quite come to breaking stones yet. It is a fine healthy occupation certainly, and allows considerable time for meditation. Still, he had no hankering after road-metal. He would keep that in reserve for the present.

He found himself opposite Menzies Hotel.

‘By gad, I have it. I will be a waiter. Soon make way in a swell place like this, if they will only take me.’

He walked into the hotel and asked for the manager. He saw the manager and said that he wanted to be a waiter.

‘Any character?’

‘No,’ said Allan, ‘unfortunately I left my testimonials in England.’

‘Any experience?’

‘Not practical, but I think I could soon learn to wait very well. I can speak French and Spanish;’ and then, with a piteous voice, he said, ‘Do try me, sir.’

‘Gentleman down on his luck,’ muttered the manager to himself. ‘Looks honest enough.’ Then aloud, ‘Very well, I’ll give you a trial, it’s a risk, but we are rather short-handed just now. What is your name?’

‘Allan Innes.’

The manager was writing it down, when Allan stopped him,

‘That is my real name, but I should be obliged if you would enter me in the books as Allan Smith.’

‘It’s all the same to me, so you are Smith henceforward.’

Allan Innes of Blairavon, county of Ayr, Scotland, Esq., B.A. St. Peter’s Coll. Oxon. Waiter at a few shillings a week in Menzies Hotel, Melbourne, Australia.

Certainly none of his old friends would have recognised him now. He was much thinner, had a long curling moustache, and a neatly-trimmed peaked beard. So far, he had not done much to conquer the

world and erect unto himself a vast fortune. He might rise to the dignity of hall-porter, and there are hall-porters, they say, who have died wealthy men, but then that was a matter of many years patient hall-portering and judicious flattery. It is easier too in a foreign country, where the cunning man says to a confiding Englishman, ‘ You speak German like a German, sir.’ ‘ Nonsense,’ says the delighted Englishman, and gives him a sovereign. Still, it was a relief to him to be doing something. It kept him from thinking, and he found that the young bloods of Melbourne who frequented the hotel were not illiberal in their tips. He had made up his mind that having become a waiter he must swallow his pride, and take whatever offered. To his joy, he found that his memory was coming back by degrees. He could remember the days after he left Llanwch and his voyage to Canary. It was as if a veil were slow-

ly being drawn off a picture, and, as each point was revealed, he remembered it and fixed its place. In time he would remember all.

What he longed for more than anything else was to see some one he knew, any one of those hundreds of friends he had had in Oxford. He wanted to feel in touch with the old world again. But they never came. He scanned each new face that entered the hotel, with an intense eagerness. Never a friend in all that vast city.

All through August and September, and nearly all October, he waited in the hotel ; was praised and trusted by the manager, and popular among his fellow-waiters.

He was beginning to calculate that he ought to be able to take a passage home in March or April at latest. Foolish Allan ! His silly pride would not let him write and ask for the help that would have been given to him, even to the last farthing.

He attributed his condition solely to his own folly, and with a sort of ascetic pleasure he determined that by his own efforts he must work his way out of the position to which he had brought himself. At home there was wealth, a noble home, and a tender, loving wife awaiting him, and yet he was serving out whisky and champagne to the descendants of glorified bullock-drivers in an hotel in Melbourne. He was not altogether unhappy. His time was so fully occupied that he had but little opportunity for thinking, and he worked his own share and a great deal more, in order to keep his mind at rest.

He only longed to see a friend's face again.

At last, in the end of October, three men came and sat at a table at which Allan was waiting ; he had known them well in the old days. Two St. Peter's men and an Oriel at the end of a pleasant tour round the world. He heard them

say that they were going to sail in four days' time for England. How he had longed for this opportunity of speaking to some one he knew, and yet now that it had come, he dared not utter a word. Of course they did not recognize him, changed as he was, and he did not care to discover his identity. He certainly was a curious mixture of modesty and pride. It would necessitate his introducing himself to them, and explanations, and even then they might not, possibly, believe him. So he listened to them talking freely of their travels. They harked back to their old Oxford days, and Allan listened with eager attention as they ran through the well-remembered names, and told of how well so and so was doing, and how that Robinson had gone all to the devil with drink, and then one of them told the tale to the other two, which Prettyman had told to Allan of Atherley. Allan longed to grasp them by the hand and say, ‘I am *of* you,

though in this degraded station of life.' But no, he was afraid, his pride kept him back.

On the following night they dined at the same table. Said one to the other,

'That was a deuced civil waiter we had last night. Same again, waiter. Magnum of Heidsieck '84 in ice.'

As Allan was uncorking the bottle, one of the men said,

'By the way, do either of you know what became of Ingersoll,' etc., etc., and Allan had to go and bring the next course.

When he came back, he heard the first speaker say,

'Talking of Ingersoll reminds me of Innes. What has happened to him? One of the best fellows that ever lived.'

They say that listeners never hear any good of themselves; the exception proves the rule.

'You are right there, he was.'

The third man of the party said,
‘Oh, I heard that——’ and then they put their heads together, and the speaker whispered his other remarks.

‘No, I don’t believe that. Innes may have been a little wild when he first came up, but he was as straight as a die, and would never go on that tack. A good soul. I should like to see him again;’ and as he said it, he touched Allan’s coat, who was standing within two inches of him, saying in a calm voice,

‘Potatoes, sir.’

From their conversation, Allan knew that they were starting for England in three days, and one of them was going to stay at St. Kilda with an old school-friend for the remaining three days until the boat started.

‘Must you go down to-night, Mason?’ said Power the Oriel man.

‘Yes, I have put it off long enough, I

ought to have gone before. Bring me my bill, waiter, and tell them to bring my things down from number 39.'

'Very good, sir.'

In a few minutes Allan came in with the bill, and Mason gave him a ten-pound note in payment. Allan went to change it. The manager said to him,

'Just ask him if he hasn't any smaller money. I have sent all the cash to the bank, and have no change at all.'

Allan asked Mason, who said, 'No,' and that he would be obliged if the waiter would get him some change.

The manager said,

'Just run over to Scott's and ask them, as a favour, to give you some change. All the shops are shut.'

Allan ran across the street, and into the hotel. He got the change and was turning to come out, when suddenly his eyes lighted upon the letter-rack, and he saw in George's well-known handwriting a letter

addressed to himself. Instantly his last stay in Melbourne flashed across his mind. He went back to the office, and said,

‘I see you have a letter addressed to me there.’

‘What name?’

‘Allan Innes.’

The manager laughed and said,

‘We have had no waiters staying as visitors in this hotel that I am aware of.’

‘But my name is Allan Innes.’

‘Oh, I daresay,’ answered the manager. ‘Now then, you had better cut across to Menzies’ with that cash, or they’ll think you’ve bolted.’

Allan went across to Menzies’, and told the manager there how that there were letters for him at Scott’s, where he had stayed nearly a year ago.

‘Well, you can wait till to-morrow. I can hardly go with you to-night.’

‘All right,’ said Allan.

Sleep was out of the question for him.

Although he had thus willingly cut himself off entirely from his own kith and kin, yet directly he saw the well-known handwriting of his old friend, a strong desire to know all about them at home came over him.

Next morning the manager could not come with him until eleven o'clock.

'This young man says you have a letter for him.'

'What is his name?' said Scott's manager.

'Well, he goes by the name of Smith in the hotel, but he told me when I took him on that his real name was Innes—Allan Innes.'

'Well, you can hardly expect me to give up letters to a total stranger who is going about under an assumed name. Not quite. Unless you can bring forward some very substantial proof as to your identity, you don't get those letters.'

‘Letters?’ said Allan. ‘Is there more than one?’

‘There’s a matter of four or five.—Let me see—yes, five.’

A thought struck Allan, and he said,

‘If you will show me the addresses on those letters I will tell you the signatures you will find inside ; and, if I am wrong, you can seal them up again and say they were opened by mistake.’

‘That sounds fair enough,’ said Scott’s manager, and he showed Allan the letters.

‘This is signed George Anstruther ; it is from my brother-in-law.’

The manager opened it, and looked at the signature.

‘Right there,’ he said.

‘This,’ said Allan, putting his hand on another, ‘is from the same person. That is from my mother, and will be signed Kate Innes ; that is from the Marchioness of Somerton, and will be signed Grizel Somerton.’

Then the fifth letter was put in front of him and he looked puzzled. Then he saw one of the post-marks, and it flashed across him that it must be from Barrington—but no, it was not his handwriting. Ah, he had it!

‘This letter is signed either by a man called Batty or Wright, I am not absolutely certain.’

The manager opened all the letters in turn and found them signed as Allan had said, and was half inclined to give them up; but, seeing that one of them contained a draft for a large sum of money, he hesitated once more. At last he said,

‘If I give up these letters I must have a guarantee for the return of this money, in case of fraud.’

This was serious. Suddenly Allan be-thought himself of the two Oxford men in the hotel, and said,

‘I can get a guarantee for its return to-night. You can keep the draft till then.’

The manager of Scott's Hotel handed over the letters doubtfully, and Allan retired to read his letters in Menzies' Hotel. He resigned his place as a waiter at once, and took a room for two nights. He was going home in two days' time with Mason, Balfour, and Power. Of that he had thoroughly made up his mind.

He read and re-read his mother's, George's, and Lady Grizel's letters, and he laughed aloud and said,

'Come home? Of course I'll come home. I was mad to leave the dear old place.'

Then he opened and read Batty's letter, and as he read a smile spread over his face. It ran thus:

'DEAR INNES,—I hardly know what to say, in fact can hardly believe it myself. You have brought us luck, and we have won the second prize in the Spanish lottery. Your share amounts to twenty-six thousand pounds. Wright is furious because we

have not won the first prize. Write and let us know where you wish your money forwarded to, and tell me where you will be found in England. I shall leave this hole as soon as I can get some one to be put in my place. My address at home is 217, The Boltons, S. Kensington. *Au revoir.*

‘Yours,

‘CECIL BATTY.’

This letter had been forwarded from the Isthmian Club. When he had finished reading, he gave a cry of delight. With all this ready money, and Lady Grizel’s in the future, what could he not do?

His thoughts flew back to the Croft, and a soft voice was whispering in his ear, ‘Not to-night, Allan darling, let us have a few hours of happiness at least.’ Then his memory gave him a very pleasant quarter-of-an-hour, at the end of which he jumped up and laughed. What a miserable, dull, uninteresting place the world would be if

it were not for memory. We live on memory and hope.

He went and told one of the waiters, with all of whom he had been on the best of terms, to lay three places, as usual, at the table at which the three men had dined the previous night.

‘But only two of ‘em’s coming,’ said the waiter.

‘I know,’ said Allan, ‘but I’m going to dine with them to-night.’

‘Why, do you know them?’

‘Yes, don’t ask questions, or say anything about it, but do as I ask you, please.’

After this Allan went out and bought some clothes, and had his beard and moustache shaved off, and then with his head in the air and his chest out, he went walking through the streets of Melbourne. He looked at the Yarra, and said contemptuously,

‘Fancy anyone being fool enough to drown himself in that filthy stream;’ and

he turned away full of virtuous indignation at the thought of such folly.

Towards evening he came back to his hotel. He knew that Power and Balfour had been out of Melbourne all day, and were not coming back till the evening. He had told a waiter to let him know when they were seated at dinner. He came in. They had both sat down with their backs to the door, and Allan heard Power say,

‘He’s laid three places. Hullo! it is a different waiter. Where’s the man who waited on us last night?’

‘He’s gone, sir.’

‘What, dismissed? Surely not.’

‘No, sir, he left of his own accord.’

‘What a swindle! I should like to have tipped him.’

At that instant Allan came up behind him, and putting his hand on Power’s shoulder, said,

‘So you may still, if you like.’

With a shout both men jumped up, upsetting the water-bottle and the glasses.

‘ My dear Innes, where have you dropped from ?’

‘ I have been in Australia for nearly a year. I am going to dine with you to-night ; I waited on you last night.’

‘ What the deuce do you mean ?’ said Power.

‘ I mean that last night I was a waiter in this hotel, and, since then, circumstances have arisen which have changed all that. But I want your help ;’ and then Allan gave them an outline of his story, at some of which they looked very sad, but when he came to the end they laughed for joy.

‘ Of course we’ll back you,’ said Balfour. ‘ I’ll leave enough money in the bank to satisfy Scott’s manager. So you are coming home with us, old cock. Mason will be awfully pleased. We were only talking of you last night.’

‘I heard every word you said, and it was uncommonly awkward for me.’

They sat long that night, talking of the days that are always fresh in a man’s memory.

Allan felt that he had lived a life-time in the last two years. How different the world looked now! Without any sort of warning the sun had suddenly burst out in all his brilliancy, right through a cloud which looked as black and impenetrable as night itself. Yesterday there was practically nothing to look forward to in the world. Through all his troubles he had never been discontented with his lot; that is to say, he accepted it always with comparative calmness, except in the one wild hour when he had been mad, but he could not help thinking of the days of his prosperity and happiness: and now they had returned and seemed ‘tenfold dearer by the power of intermitted usage.’ Yesterday—no hope. To-day—youth, wealth, hope,

friends, and a vision of a life of unending happiness. Little wonder that he thought the world looked beautiful and tempting. He could already see the green fields and leafy woods of his own fair home, and he could scarce restrain his wild delight at the thought that, in two months' time, he might be sitting in his own house once more. Next morning Allan got the draft for two hundred pounds, Balfour and Power acting as joint security for him.

He engaged a berth in the same steamer, and then posted off fifty pounds to the doctor at Fryerstown, in a letter which told him of his good fortune, and expressing a hope that if ever he should be in England he would not fail to come and stay at Blairavon.

He then thought of telegraphing to his mother; but no, he would take them by surprise. They would be the more rejoiced at his return. On the evening of the following day, with joy in his heart

and the light of hope in his eyes, he was standing on the deck of the boat that was fast leaving the lights of Melbourne behind her, homeward bound.

CHAPTER XI.

‘*αὐτὶς ἔπειτα πέδονδε κυλίνδετο λᾶας ἀναιδῆς.*’

WITH very different feelings to those which he felt on his voyage out, Allan started for England again. When he came out, he had hope on his side, it is true, but hope was a poor sort of thing compared with the assurance of joy and power which he now felt. Perhaps some of my readers may have thought that so far fortune had been very unkind to him. He certainly had not been lucky—in one way, but through all his evil fortune he still had the assurance of the greatest luck in the world, in the future, the love of a good woman. Hardship, especially to a young man, is an excellent master, it makes one kick and swear a good deal, I grant you, but in the

end it does one good. It is unpleasantly true. For Allan two or three years poverty and degradation were a small price to pay for the illimitable prospect of happiness in the future. Moreover, he had brought the hardships on himself to a great extent. By one rash, impetuous act he had brought down on his own head two years of exile, and one year of real hard work to get his daily bread.

The ship was timed to reach Plymouth on the 17th of December. Allan had laid all his plans. He would not announce his arrival. He would go straight to the Croft and claim Muriel—Muriel who had been waiting calmly for him, during all this weary time of silence and sorrow. He would go through all the horrors of life rolled into the space of one half-year, if this were to be his prize at the end.

The four friends had the great ship almost to themselves. Very few passengers travel at that time of year between England and Australia, except on business.

They lived their old days over again, and, with the experience bred of five years' absence, they mutually agreed that the Oxford days were an exceedingly foolish time, but a time not to be missed nor exchanged for any other period of one's life. The days and nights passed in one continuous 'Do you remember?' The days flitted by. They were coming back by the same route as that by which Allan had gone out to Australia, and on the evening of the 11th of December they dropped anchor in Santa Cruz roads, just at dinner-time.

Allan was getting over-excited, and began to find the days wofully long, when an incident happened which made the few remaining days of the voyage pass very quickly.

'No time to go ashore, gentlemen,' said the captain; 'we shall only stay here a few hours for coal, and directly we get the mails on board, and those few baskets of bananas you saw in the lighters, we shall be off. I am not much inside my allow-

ance, and if we get dirty weather in the Bay, it will take us all our time to be up to date.'

After dinner they idly watched boxes of oranges and bunches of bananas being slung on board. The air was hot, and thinking it would be cooler in their cabins, they all went to bed about eleven.

Allan woke up with a start, and thought that he had only been asleep a few minutes. He turned up the electric light, and saw that it was after one o'clock. Then he heard a roar of,

' Steward, bring some hot water, lemon and sugar at once.'

This was interesting. Allan got up and dressed, and went up into the saloon.

' Well, steward, have you got them ? I am sure I beg your pardon, sir. Have you seen a steward anywhere ?'

The speaker was a jolly, healthy-looking old man of about sixty-five, somewhat slightly built, with a ruddy face and a

merry pair of light blue eyes. His companion was a man, probably but few years younger, but who might have passed for forty. He was enormous both in stature and in girth, and his blue eyes gleamed very kindly at Allan as he came in.

‘Let me introduce myself and my friend,’ said the first speaker; ‘my name is Anderson, my friend’s Dickson.’

‘I will see if I can wake up a steward for you,’ said Allan; and in a few minutes he returned with the head steward, who looked very sleepy and angry.

‘Ha, ha,’ said the tall man, ‘we have just come off—we are frozen,’ (the thermometer stood at 70°,) ‘and we are delicate, and the doctor says we must have something warm before we go to bed.’

‘Very sorry, sir, bar is shut up, and the cook has gone to his bunk. It is quite impossible.’

At this point Dickson produced a flask, which was slung across his back, under-

neath his long Inverness cape. The steward smiled when he saw it. It looked more like a barrel than a flask. Allan afterwards discovered that it carried three quarts. Dickson looked first at the flask lovingly, then at the steward, and smiled. Then he produced a small picnic cup from his pocket, looking at the steward the while. Then he slowly unscrewed the stopper of the flask and poured out a cup full of whisky, which he solemnly handed to the steward. The steward touched his forehead and drank it off at a draught, and Dickson, looking at him with his head on one side, laughed a gleeful laugh, and said,

‘ Good ?’

‘ Rather !’ said the steward.

‘ Ah, I thought you looked a reasonable sort of man ; now then, just bring up some hot water, sugar, and lemons. I am sure our young friend here will join us.’

‘ Impossible, sir.’

‘What! Do you mean to tell me that you drank all that whisky, the best to be procured in the whole of Scotland, when you were not going to bring us hot water? Where’s the doctor?’

‘Do you want to see him, sir?’

‘Yes, at once.’

In a few minutes a young Irish doctor appeared, rubbing his eyes. The two old gentlemen were now leaning back on the cushioned seats of the saloon, looking the picture of misery.

‘Well, gentlemen?’ said the doctor.

Anderson looked up with a face of pain, and said,

‘I am sorry to disturb you, but I have been ordered always to have a hot bottle for my feet, when I go to bed. Will you be good enough to order that the hot water is procured? I presume that comes under the head of medical comforts. I have a bottle;’ and he produced an india-rubber hot-water bottle from his coat-pocket.

'Certainly, sir,' said the doctor; and he turned to the steward, who was standing with his mouth open, gaping with astonishment at the sudden change of appearance in the two men, and said, 'Get the purser's key of the galley, and get the water, Harris. Good-night, gentlemen.'

Dickson followed the steward along to the galley, and, looking in, said,

'I am sure that the cook must have left some lemon and sugar about—ah, yes, here we are. You can bring the kettle along with you, Harris. I don't think we'll use the hot-water bottle just yet.'

'Well, I'm d——d,' said the steward to himself, 'if this don't beat anything I ever see!'

When he came back to the saloon with the kettle, the two old gentlemen were talking and laughing away as merrily as possible.

'Here's the water, sir, but I can't get any tumblers.'

Dickson solemnly produced two large

soda-water tumblers in cases from either pocket of his great-coat, and said to Allan,

‘Young man, when you have been round the world as often as I have, you will find it useful occasionally to carry *some* of the necessaries of life with you.’

At three o’clock Allan went to his bunk, determining to have a long sleep, but at six o’clock in the morning he was awakened by some one singing; and, popping his head out of his cabin door, he saw his two friends of the previous night, in dressing-gowns, coming along the passage arm-in-arm, as fresh as daisies, on their way to the bath-room.

From that time on the two old gentlemen were the life and soul of the ship. They were as full of fun as lambs, and kept the captain, himself a venerable old gentleman of seventy-five, in roars of laughter for the rest of the voyage.

Once and once only did Dickson really get angry. It was the day before they

arrived at Plymouth, and Allan and the others were sitting in the saloon having tea. Dickson strolled in.

‘Tea, sir,’ said the steward.

‘I like my tea in a large tumbler,’ said Dickson.

‘Yes, sir?’ and in a few minutes the obsequious steward, on tips intent, came back with a smoking soda-water tumbler full of tea, in which he had put some milk.

Dickson looked at him for one instant with a face of unutterable disgust, and said,

‘Well, of all the dunderheaded asses I ever met, you are the biggest. Do you suppose I meant to drink *tea* out of a soda-water tumbler? Tea means two glasses of whisky and a bottle of soda-water. Not ship’s whisky. You’ll find a baby in my cabin.’

The steward gasped, and had breath enough to ask,

‘What, sir?’

‘A baby. Under the pillow; go and look.’

Then Dickson addressing no one in particular said,

‘ I have been four days on this ship, and he offers me *tea*. Heugh ! ’

The steward came up in a few minutes with a broad grin on his face, carrying the aforesaid flask or barrel.

‘ Is this the baby, sir ? ’

‘ Of course it is,’ said Dickson. ‘ The most comforting baby I ever saw too.’

Allan discovered that these two old men were wealthy, and that every two years or so, when they got tired of England, they took a voyage together, and had done so for thirty years ; sometimes it was to Australia or China or New Zealand, sometimes, as on this occasion, only to Tenerife. It certainly seemed to agree with them, for two jollier, more open-hearted, and amusing old men could not be found in the four seas, and they made the five days between Tenerife and Plymouth pass like a flash.

At two o'clock next day Allan was on English soil once more. He said good-bye to Power, Balfour, and Mason, who wanted him to go on to London, but he had other plans.

‘Where to, sir?’ said a porter at the Custom House.

‘What’s the best hotel?’

‘The “Duke of Cornwall,” sir.’

‘Is it far from here?’

‘Oh, dear no, five minutes’ walk from here.’

‘All right, I’ll walk up. Bring my things up there, will you?’

Allan went for a long walk in the clear frosty air in the afternoon, and when, at half-past eight in the evening, he had finished dinner, and was sitting over a blazing fire, he smiled to himself, as he thought that at no distant date he would be sitting over his own fire, in his own house, with his beloved wife by his side. The waiter came bustling in, and brushed

an imaginary speck of dust off the table at Allan's side, looking expectantly at Allan the while.

'Bring me a cup of coffee, a glass of curaçao, and the best cigar you have.'

'Yessir,' and in a few minutes he returned. 'To-day's *Standard*, sir? Trains very late to-day, sir. Terrible fog in London, sir. Only just arrived.'

'Thank you,' said Allan, taking the paper and putting it down at his side.

He had no interest in English news at present. After two years and a half of absence, one forgets the run of English affairs.

He slowly sipped his coffee and his curaçao and idly smoked his cigar, gazing into the fire the while.

There is no place in the wide world like England at any time or under any circumstances, but with youth, health, strength and money, it is a veritable heaven upon earth. So thought Allan, at least, and

his other thoughts were pleasant too, for as he sat with his feet upon the fender (a most reprehensible habit, by the way,) he smiled to himself. His cigar was finished, and soon he dropped into a doze, to be awakened by the bustling waiter.

‘ Any orders, sir? Can I bring you a whisky and soda, sir?’

‘ No, thanks. Oh, I am going to town to-morrow by the 8.30. I must be waked at 7.30, and have breakfast at 8.’

‘ Very good, sir.’

When the waiter left, Allan yawned and picked up the paper and read, or tried to read through the leading articles. They did not interest him much. He saw that the evergreen Mr. Gladstone had been making a great speech somewhere, and that Ireland was still the most distressful country in the world. He yawned again, and folded the paper in half, and was putting it down on the table, when something on the front page caught his eye, which

he read twice—thrice, and then dropped the paper with a cry of pain. It was this :

‘ On the 15th instant, at St. David’s, Llanwch, by the Bishop of Llandaff, Sir Lionel Plantagenet Pauncefoote, Bart., D.L., of Plas Nwmwhllyn, Cardiganshire, and Blynnewra, Breconshire, to Muriel, only daughter of John Vivian, Esq., J.P., of the Croft, Llanwch.’

CHAPTER XII.

Arco armado siempre, queda flojo.

Old Spanish Proverb.

AT eleven o'clock the waiter came in to put out the lights, and seeing Allan sitting at the table with his head between his hands, thought him asleep, so he coughed loudly, shut the door ostentatiously, dropped a book on the floor, coughed again, and finally touched Allan on the shoulder. As Allan looked up with an expression of weariness and despair on his face, the waiter started back in amazement. Could this be the same smiling young gentleman whom he had waited on only an hour ago?

'Well, what is it?' said Allan, listlessly.

'I beg your pardon, sir. Are you ill? Shall I send for a doctor?'

'No, only leave me alone. But I suppose it is late, I had better go to bed.'

When he had left, the waiter looked at the door with his head on one side, then scratched it and shook it (his head not the door), then looked at the empty coffee-cup, at the dying fire, shook his head again, and then the paper lying on the floor caught his eye.

'That's it. Mother dead, perhaps. Poor fellow! Hinnies 'is name is. Let me see. No. Something wrong, but blow me if I can guess what it is;' and he went, still shaking his head, to bed.

No sleep came to Allan's weary eyelids that night. All that he cared to live for, or thought he cared to live for, dashed from his grasp. Only two little days ago. Cursed fate that had kept him so long waiting in Melbourne. Two little days. She surely would never have married had

she known that he was coming home. Why had he not telegraphed to her to say that he was rich and was coming home to marry her? Better to have died in Australia after all. There was now no longer any object in his life. Where were all the visions of happiness with his love now? He had no longer any right to call her that now. Yes, he had ; there was some mistake, some fatal mistake. She loved him still. She must love him as truly as he had clung to her all through the weary time of despair that he had spent apart from her. He would go to London and drown his care in the whirl and bustle of the great city. No. He would go home and devote his time to farming, and looking after his estate. But alone—what a difference! He did not know what to think, he did not know what to do. A thousand schemes crossed his mind one after another, and were one and all rejected in turn.

He came down next morning, played with his breakfast, and went off by the 8.30 to London. The waiter almost forgot to dumbly suggest a tip, in the way that waiters only have, in his concern at the marvellous change that one day had wrought in Allan. His face was drawn and haggard, and his eyes were blood-shot and wild-looking, as he turned out of the hotel to cross over the road to the station.

In the afternoon he found himself in Paddington Station. His journey up had been passed in a sort of dazed condition. He had tried to think that after all this was no uncommon case. Thousands of men had been, and were, thrown over by heartless women. He could live without her. She was worthless. Her promise was not worth the paper on which it was written. Yet it could not be so. Muriel was not like other women. There was something behind it all which he did not understand. His love for her had so eaten

into his heart in those two years and a half of separation and silence, that it had become a part of his very existence, and, now that he had no right to love her any more, he felt that all incentive to life had been suddenly and rudely snatched away. A time comes in most men's lives when they feel that they hate the whole human race, that their faith in everybody and everything in heaven and earth is dead. It had come to Allan. All his previous troubles had been as nothing compared with this, mere wounds of the body, so to speak, while here was a wound to the heart which Time himself, the great healer, could never cure.

‘Want a porter, sir?’

Allan was standing on the platform of Paddington Station, oblivious of time or space or even porters.

‘Yes, I suppose so,’ he answered. ‘Get me a hansom. Westminster Palace Hotel,’ he said, mechanically.

He engaged a room ; he strolled out into the street. He took just such another walk as he had taken five years before, after he heard of his father's ruin. He was merely thinking, thinking, and it was driving him almost mad. He walked on aimlessly. Three or four times he was pulled by policemen almost from under the very wheels of cabs and omnibuses. He did not seem to care very much whether he was run over or not. He was still suffering from the first intense agony of disappointment. The last policeman who gripped him by the arm at the Mansion House crossing (he had wandered into the City) said kindly to him,

‘The best thing you can do, sir, is to get into a 'ansom and drive straight 'ome. I've got a son of my own, and I knows all about it ; you won't do no good wandering about here, when you are down on your luck.’

Allan thanked him with a ghost of

a smile, and walked on. Along Queen Victoria Street, down past St. Paul's, along Fleet Street, and into the Strand. Just as he came to St. Martin's Church, he bumped up against some one who was coming in the opposite direction. Allan apologized and was passing on, when the man ran back, looked at Allan and said,

‘Good heaven, Innes, is that you?’

For one instant Allan could not remember his man. He knew his face and voice, but his name had gone.

‘Don’t you remember me? Batty.’

‘Of course,’ said Allan, shaking hands with him.

‘Why on earth didn’t you answer my letter? It’s a year ago since I wrote.’

Allan explained.

‘I banked your money, on deposit, in my name. It amounted to twenty-four thousand pounds, with the commission for transmitting it deducted. Dine with me to-night at the Devonshire Club, will you?’

Allan did not know how to refuse, so he accepted, and was glad afterwards, for it took him out of himself for a few hours. From sheer weariness, he slept soundly and well that night, but in the morning the same pain was tearing at his heart. He would go up to the Isthmian Club and talk to some old friends. As he passed Jermyn Street, he suddenly remembered the Turkish baths, where he had often gone before, during his raids from Oxford. He turned into the street and went into the baths.

One reads of the delights of opium, of how all sorrow and care is banished as if by magic ; but one also reads of the terrible after-effects. Allan had not descended, or, as De Quincey would say, ascended yet to taking opium. He did something better. He took a Turkish bath instead. I will defy any man to think during that process. If he tries at all, which is doubtful, he thinks in a feeble, half-hearted sort of way

that he is hot, and that it is doing him good: but the languor and lassitude, the dreamy idleness that comes over one, prevents all serious effort at thought: when it is all over, and one is being pounded and punched, and otherwise maltreated by an over-eager official, the only thought that can possibly enter one's mind is one of revenge. Then comes the plunge into ice-cold water, which effectually prevents one from thinking of anything but how to get one's breath. And then the excitement of weighing oneself, or if one does not care to weigh oneself, (Englishmen, as a rule, show a decided objection to knowing their weight, after they have passed twenty-five stone or so, say,) of watching fat old gentlemen, with an air of eagerness quite out of proportion to the importance of the occasion, haggling over half an ounce with the attendant. This part of the programme is more interesting in Germany than in England, for there, among

the middle classes at least, one can almost gauge a man's wealth by the size of his stomach. There you may see old men and even young men, looking more like walking beer-barrels than anything else, taking Turkish baths solely that they may be able to drink more beer afterwards. A worthy German professor said to me one day, 'I cannot understand you English; with you it is some credit to a man that he does not drink; here in Germany, if a man has the money to spend on beer, and does not spend it, we think him a fool.' But to our Turkish bath. After the weighing process, comes the coffee and cigarette, and the half doze, half dream, bred of physical exhaustion. A glorious two hours, a panacea for all the ills of the mind: better than opium, because opium both deadens and exhilarates the brain at different times, a Turkish bath gives it a rest.

Everything looked brighter to Allan

when he came out into the sharp December air, and walked briskly up to the Isthmian Club.

‘Lunch?’ Yes, he would have lunch. In the dining-room he met one or two old acquaintances, who nodded to him as men do. They had not seen him for three years, but with an acquaintance yesterday and three years ago are all the same thing. After lunch he came down into the smoking-room, where he met Ingersoll, who literally jumped at him. They sat talking in the smoking-room for an hour and a half, and then Allan thought he would go and call on Lady Grizel. He came out of the club, (no longer situated in dreary Grafton Street, but in Piccadilly at the corner of the Green Park,) and turning to the left, he walked quickly down towards Rutland Gate. As he walked, he thought how glad Lady Grizel would be to see him, and he wondered whether she would be changed or not, a little greyer, perhaps,

but she would never grow old : she was one of those people whose vitality never seems to diminish.

‘ To me at least, she will always appear the same,’ said he to himself.

He reached the house and rang the bell. The old butler came, and, with the privilege of long acquaintance, ‘ hoped Mr. Innes was well, hadn’t seen him for a long time, had heard he had been travelling in foreign parts.’ He knew all about it, of course, servants know everything, and knowing, too, his mistress’s anxiety about his return, was honestly glad to see him.

‘ No, her ladyship was not at home, she had left yesterday for Ardarrochar, Sir George Anstruther’s place in Ayrshire. But perhaps Mr. Innes was going up there too, and would meet her.’

Allan thanked him, and said that he was going up there almost immediately.

When he came out of the gate, he crossed over into the park and walked up towards

the corner. He was thinking, thinking, of course. His thoughts resolved themselves into this : that there was something stronger than love, and that was duty. He had learned many things since he left England, and he had almost learned the lesson which comes last of all to everybody, and which is the most difficult to learn, to many impossible, and that is, that to suppress Self is the beginning of life. The dream of his life was over, but duty remained : the only religion in the world—‘do your duty.’ He could and would be useful to somebody yet. When he had had that fight with death by his own hand in Australia, he had honestly come to the conclusion that he was a mere cumberer of the earth, that by his death many obstacles would be removed from the paths of others : it was not that he was really tired of his life, but that he saw no honourable means of livelihood, and he could not endure the thought of being a burden

upon others. The criminal side of the question had only forcibly struck him when he carried the little child in his arms. The child's cry had awakened him out of Self, and he knew that life was life for others as well as for himself. He did not know this clearly at the time, but it was borne in upon him by degrees. He had said to himself, after he had been rescued from himself, that he had wronged Muriel by even thinking that she would not care to wait for him ; she loved him, was not that enough, and now——? Well, he must go up to Scotland.—He would go on the following night. He must first make some arrangement about the money which he had won in the Spanish lottery being placed to his credit, and order some clothes, and do various little things to-morrow.

It was just beginning to get dusk when he came along past the Isthmian Club again. He was walking briskly, and had

just turned down into St. James's Street when, not ten yards away from him, coming up the street, he saw—Muriel, tall, calm, pale, and majestic : she was listening, with ill-disguised indifference, to the senile babble of the man by her side—her husband. What a change in her face! Instead of the soft, winning grace which had captivated Allan's heart so many years ago, there was a hard, stern expression, which grief alone could have produced. Her husband was toddling by her side, with a grin—half pride, half exultation—on his miserable, wrinkled, wicked old face, and as he grinned he showed a double row of glistening teeth, quite as good to look at, but not so comfortable, as those which Dame Nature supplies. Muriel had evidently been walking too fast for him, moreover, or possibly his stays were too tight, for Allan saw that he held his hand to his side as he walked, and that he gasped. All this flashed across Allan's vision in an

instant, and before he had taken three steps more Muriel had turned her head away from her husband, and looked up the street straight into Allan's face, who was at that moment under a lamp-post. Allan paused, and, with stedfast eyes, gazed at the face of the woman he had loved so well. She was on her honeymoon! Great God, what a mockery! Her honeymoon! If happiness comes to us poor mortals only once in a lifetime, surely that is the one time above all others when one would be led to expect it?

Muriel stopped, and clutched at her husband's arm. Terror, amazement, and grief chased each other over her countenance like clouds in the sky on an April day; and then, with a cry of passionate agony, she would have fallen in the street but for Allan, who took two steps forward, and she fell into his arms. Sir Lionel was distracted; he shouted for brandy, and waved to passing hansoms, thereby drop-

ping his stick, which he could not pick up again owing to his stays. Only for an instant Muriel lay in Allan's arms ; she had not fainted. It was only the shock caused by the apparition of the one man in the world whom she loved, and whom she regarded as dead, that had caused her to totter forward. She whispered the one word 'Forgive' into Allan's ear as he bent over her, and then as she stood erect again, she smiled gently at Allan, and said, 'Thank you, Mr. Innes, I should have fallen but for you.' Allan answered never a word, he raised his hat and passed on down the street. Sir Lionel glanced at Allan and had a sort of recollection of having seen him before somewhere, but could not remember where. He hailed a hansom, and he and his wife drove away. Allan walked on. He was perplexed. He saw that surprise was the chief emotion which Muriel had expressed on her face when she saw him, and then

fear. She looked at him as though he were an apparition. It must be so. They had said that he was dead. He could hardly believe that she would marry anyone else had she known him to be alive. Other women might, but Muriel was different. There was a mystery, and Allan felt his heart grow lighter at the thought that it was not at her own desire that she had linked her lot to a creature that during the whole of his life had done nothing to justify his existence. Yes, he loved her more madly, more passionately than ever; it might be wrong, but it could not be helped. She was his first love, and she should be his last.

CHAPTER XIII.

‘Sweet the laverock’s note and lang,
Lilting wildly up the glen ;
And aye the o’ercome o’ the sang
Is “Will he no come back again ?”’

WE must hark back to the Croft again for a moment, to the summer of 1889. After Muriel’s second refusal of Thomas, her parents regarded her as merely a wayward child, crying for what she could not get, and one who had no eyes to her real interests. It was in vain that Muriel pleaded that she could not and would not under any circumstances marry Thomas. The connection was what Mrs. Vivian looked forward to. He was the greatest man in the whole of the county, by virtue of his

wealth. It mattered nothing that by virtue of his past life he was not fit to speak to, or even come into the society of virtuous women. That was nothing. Wild oats! what are they? Nothing, in the eyes of the world. To do Mr. and Mrs. Vivian justice, they had brought themselves to believe that they were acting for their daughter's good. Thomas was evidently very much in earnest, and they regarded Muriel's dislike to him as a mere caprice, not really worth serious consideration. It is easy to blind oneself to the real truth, when personal interest is concerned. What more could the girl want? A husband evidently much in love with her, and an establishment and an income to offer which many a man in a much higher grade in society would be glad to have. This obstinacy of hers was mere 'mid-summer madness.'

Her father cursed Allan, and his own folly in welcoming him to his house.

Muriel's determination could not be shaken. She would not marry Thomas, but the loathing which began to be engendered in her heart for her own home, made her feel that she would do almost anything to get out of it. That seemed impossible until her father's death, and then it depended solely on his caprice. Home: the word meant to her now the one place on earth where she could find no love or peace. She was almost in despair, there was no one to whom she could stretch out her hand in suppliance. Her earthly father no longer cared to conceal his displeasure at what he considered her folly, and even her Father in Heaven seemed to have forgotten her.

At last, worn out by continual resistance, her spirit almost broken, and longing for nothing but death, an opportunity offered itself for her release from home.

It was a blustering, wet afternoon in October. For weeks neither her father

nor her mother had addressed a word of love to her. She was sitting listlessly in her own room with her hands clasped upon her knees, watching the rain as it dashed against the window. A tap at her door.

‘The master would like to see you in the library, Miss Muriel.’

‘Tell him I am coming immediately.’

With a weary sigh she rose, and, wondering at the sudden summons, went downstairs.

She found her father standing in front of the fire, with an open letter in his hand.

‘Sit down, Muriel. I want to talk to you for a little.’

He spoke kindly, and Muriel, expecting some new argument to persuade her to marry Thomas, sat down with an air of indifference.

‘Since, for some reason to me utterly unaccountable, you will not entertain the

idea of marrying a man for whom I have a great—— h'm, whom I regard as a most eligible partner, I have another proposal to make to you. I have your attention, Muriel ?'

Muriel nodded her head.

' By the afternoon post I received this letter from Sir Lionel Pauncefoote. You know that he is an old admirer of yours, and to-day he has done you the honour, through me, to ask you to be his wife. I hope you fully realize the honour he has done you. He is rather past the flower of life certainly,' (he was sixty-seven and looked ten years older,) ' but consider his position. He is a baronet, one of the oldest creations,' (his ancestor had bought his baronetcy from James I., and from that time on, every succeeding scion of this noble race had contributed nothing to its honour, but much to the history of its villainy, libertinism, and debauchery ; the present baronet, if report spoke true, was

no unworthy successor to his forbears). ‘He is a man of enormous wealth, and is universally——’ he was going to say ‘respected,’ but the word stuck in his throat, ‘and in fact a most desirable husband in every way.’

He did not add that he had not a tooth in his head, that his former wife had died of a broken heart through his cruelty, that he wore stays, and was a cripple from gout for three parts of the year; all this was unnecessary, being obvious.

‘Don’t hurry over your decision, Muriel. Sir Lionel says he would have asked you in person, but was afraid of taking you by surprise. Take a week to think about it, and I hope, my dear Muriel, that you will be more reasonable in this case than you were in the last.’

Muriel heard nothing after the first sentence which her father had spoken. Here was her chance of escape, and, as she thought of it, it flashed across her

mind that the bondage into which she would enter on her marriage could not last very long.

She rose from her chair and said,
‘ You may tell Sir Lionel that I will marry him. I don’t want to think about it,’ and she went up to her own room.

She took up a photograph of Allan, which she had cut out of an old group, and said,

‘ Forgive me, my darling. I can bear my life no longer, anything is better than this.’

So Muriel was sold for thirty thousand pounds per annum. There was a gorgeous wedding in two months’ time, that is, two days before Allan landed in England. By the cruelty of Fate, he had arrived forty-eight hours too late. Even at the very altar, before the fatal words had been said, she would have come to him. She would have torn her veil and jewels from off her head and neck, and gone away with

pride to live with him in proverty, if necessary.

The day after his meeting with Muriel in London, Allan journeyed up to Scotland by the night-train. He reached Glasgow, and determined not to go to Ardarrochar until the evening. He went down to Blairavon by a midday train, and got out at the station and walked on through the elms up to the house.

The peculiarity about Blairavon is that it has two fronts. The nominal front of the house faces the river, but the actual front faces the stables, which are at the back of the house, forming the fourth side of the court-yard, (that seems to be a somewhat Hibernian explanation, but doubtless my readers will understand,) a space of some fifty yards lying between the stables and the back or front-door.

Allan walked in through the large iron gates. It was a clear frosty day, with no

snow on the ground, and his feet crunched on the gravel as he walked over it. He did not go up to the back (or front door, whichever you like to call it) but stood quite close up to the stables and gazed fondly at the dear old house which was to be his in reality again, very soon. No smoke issued from the chimneys, the blinds were down, and the whole house wore an air of desertion. His eyes wandered lovingly over it, and stopped at the little window in one of the turrets above the porch. His own bed-room. Many a time in the old days had that window rattled under the pebbles that Gilchrist had thrown up in the grey of morning, when Allan would pop out his head, and Gilchrist, in a hoarse whisper, would say,

‘ There’s a wheen dukes i’ the marshy grund doon by the watter, Maister Awllan, ye’ll mebbe for haeing a whang at them.’

‘ Two minutes,’ Allan would answer, and soon the two friends, with old Rover at

their heels, would be splashing through the dewy grass in the cool morning air.

With a sigh Allan turned past the side of the house on to the terrace, and looked down at the river sliding peacefully along in the valley below. Then he walked down the broad elm walk past the old castle which Gilchrist's tales had rendered dear to him, until he came to the river bank. Unconsciously the Yarra with all its slimy filth came back to his mind, and he smiled, and thought to himself, 'There is something stronger than love and sorrow and trouble after all.'

He turned from the river and walked past the house again, and up the hill into the woods towards the kennels. The sun was just going down, and there was no breath of air. He could hear the pheasants and rabbits crackling about among the dry sticks in the cover as he passed. Soon he came to a long grass ride cut in the wood, which ran straight through it for nearly

two miles, intersected here and there by other and shorter rides.

Here and there a rabbit, ‘fondling his own harmless face,’ would prick up his ears and listen, and then suddenly make a dash into the protecting wood as if all the dogs in the world were after him. Here was work, thought Allan to himself. He would nurse and care for this dear old home of his ancestors, and by constant action and work he would fight down the great love which still welled up in his heart. Ah, but how much easier would it have been had Muriel been there to help him. He must think of her no more, though, now. She was dead to him. He would do his duty, and by degrees he would forget. But—he had given his heart once, and to this he made up his mind that he would never marry now. Jack might marry, and raise up Inneses for the time to come. As he mused thus, he became aware that a man, with a dog at his heels, was approaching

him rapidly along the ride; evidently a keeper.

The man, with a ‘Quiet, Sweep!’ and a rap with his stick on the dog’s head, who had begun to growl, touched his hat to Allan, and said,

‘ Beg pardon, sir, but Maister Hogson doesna alloo strangers tae walk i’ the wuds.’

Allan smiled, and said,

‘ Indeed? And who may Mr. Hogson be?’

With ill-concealed contempt the keeper replied,

‘ He’s the mon that’s had the big hoose for a year noo. It’s fower years sin’ the laird was here last.’

‘ Ah, well, he won’t have it much longer. I am coming back here myself in May,’ said Allan.

‘ Ye’ll no’ be the laird?’ said the keeper, in a tone of delight, as he whipped off his hat.

Allan nodded.

‘ Hech, but I’m recht glad tac see ye, sir. They were sayin’ doon i’ the village that ye was deed somewherees in Australy, or France, or some o’ they furrin pairts.’

Allan said that perhaps Mr. Hogson had a longer lease than the gentleman to whom he had first let the place, but the keeper thought that he had only taken it for a year, and added,

‘ Mebbe ye’ll be for anither hand wi’ the dugs, sir, when ye come back. I ken fine M’Evoy will hae the heid-keeper’s place, but mebbe ye’ll hae room for me.’

Allan said he thought it was very possible, and that he would remember him.

‘ Thank ye kindly, sir ; and I hope it’ll no be lang afore ye’re here agen.’

Allan said good-bye to the keeper, and, going out by the kennels on to the high-road, walked back to the station.

It was eight o’clock before he got to Pinwherry, and, telling the station-master

that he would have his luggage sent for, began to walk up to Ardarrochar.

Strange: a feeling of fear came over him: a nameless dread. Perhaps something might have happened to his mother —to Jack. Where was his longing now to see the faces he loved so well? This curious sense of impending trouble made him hesitate. He walked past the lodge-gates and up the road for nearly a mile before he turned and came back again. The lodge-keeper was not the same one as he remembered in former years.

It was a quarter to nine when he reached the house.

He passed the library, where a solitary lamp, turned low, was burning, and so past the porch of the front door to the other side of the house where the drawing-room stood, from which a bright light was streaming on to the lawn below.

It was freezing, but, by mistake possibly, one of the side windows of the bow

was partially open, and Allan, getting to the side of this, peeped in. The first figure he saw was that of his mother, seated on one side of the fire in an arm-chair. He gave a sigh of relief. She was doing, or pretending to do, some of that fancy-work which some ladies always seem to be doing, and which never seems to get any further on. On the opposite side of the fire, George was sitting in another arm-chair, reading the *Nineteenth Century*. Between the two, seated on a low chair, Lady Grizel was leaning forward and gazing intently into the fire, her hands placed on either side of her face, and her elbows on her knees. Not a graceful position ; but she was not thinking whether her position was graceful or not, she was merely thinking, thinking very deeply. They did not look a very happy party. At the piano, Amy was seated idly turning over the pages of a song-book. She had evidently been singing, and was going to sing again.

Suddenly she put away the song-book, and took up a song, lying loose, from the chair beside her. She looked at Mrs. Innes, put down the song again, picked it up once more, and with another glance at Mrs. Innes began to sing, first very soft and low ; as the song went on, she gradually raised her voice until it rang loud and clear on the frosty air outside. She sang :

- ‘ Like the sun, when he sinks in silence,
Blood-red behind the hill ;
So fades my Hope at evening,
When all the world is still.
- ‘ When dismal, darkling Winter
Comes with its icy breath ;
Despair is by my pillow,
And I pray for kindly Death.
- ‘ Then I dream, in fitful dozes,
That I see my love again ;
And wake—to nought but the patter
Of the hail on my window-pane.
- ‘ Yet Hope returns with sunrise,
Dispelling the clouds of night ;
May God so turn, in His mercy,
My darkness into light.’

Mrs. Innes first dropped her work, and turned and looked at Amy as she sang, then Lady Grizel took her hands from her

face and sat up in her chair and listened. Finally George let his book rest on his knees, and turned half round to watch Amy as she sang.

When the song was done, Allan saw his mother furtively wipe the tears from her eyes.

‘What’s that, Amy dear?’ said George.

‘It is called “Sunset and Sunrise,” quite a new song.’

Allan turned away, walked to the front of the house, and rang at the bell.

The butler came, and, on seeing him, gave vent to an involuntary expression of surprise and joy. Allan told him not to announce him, but to allow him to go into the library. The butler must merely say that a gentleman wanted to see Sir George on particular business.

With a beating heart he heard steps coming along the passage, and turned as the door opened. It was the butler.

‘Sir George will be here directly, sir.’

Allan could not stand still doing nothing; a book was lying open on a table near the door. He picked it up. Horace. He began to read, and was thoroughly engrossed in ‘*Jam satis terris, nivis atque diræ,*’ etc., when the door opened, and George walked almost into his arms.

‘Allan!’ he cried, and literally fell upon his neck. ‘Stay here, she has waited long enough, she shall wait no longer;’ and George almost ran along the corridor to the drawing-room. He opened the door, and said, calmly,

‘Mother dear, I want you in the library for a minute.’

They went along the corridor and he opened the library door, and as he did so he whispered, ‘He has come,’ and pushed her gently in and closed the door again. People do not die of joy, and he felt that no one should witness the meeting of mother and son.

After closing the library door, this young

man behaved in a most extraordinary manner. He rushed along the corridor and burst into the drawing-room where Lady Grizel and Amy were now sitting over the fire, ran up to them and kissed them both boisterously, then danced about the room in a frenzy of delight.

‘My dear Amy, I am afraid he has a fit. Ring for Barton,’ said Lady Grizel.

George stopped and laughed, and said,
‘What is the best news in the world
that you could possibly hear?’

Lady Grizel did not answer the question, but simply said, ‘He has come,’ and was going out at the door.

‘Stay, Lady Grizel, he has come, yes, and is with his mother in the library; we will leave them alone for a time,’ said George.

After half-an-hour’s eager waiting, during which Lady Grizel and Amy besieged George with questions about Allan, which he of course could not answer, having

only been with him a few seconds, the door opened and they came in: Allan with his arm round his mother's waist, supporting her. She was still weeping tears of silent joy, and fondling his disengaged hand.

What a meeting! What a mingling of tears and laughter, kisses and questions. George himself found the greatest difficulty in preventing himself from shouting aloud for joy. He wanted to do something foolish. There is nothing like it, if you want to give vent to your feelings.

It was four o'clock in the morning before they went to bed, and they went only because George insisted upon it. They would have sat for days listening to the story of Allan's wanderings. When he came to the tale of Reid's death and self-sacrifice, Mrs. Innes wept tears of bitter remorse at having so misjudged him. Lady Grizel and Amy wept with sorrow at the death of a good man, and George,

after looking very stern and frowning very viciously for a time, rose and left the room, saying in a thick voice that he thought he had left the lamp burning in the library : an obvious untruth, as Barton had put out all the lights hours before.

Strange to say, Allan utterly forgot to tell them about the money he had won in the Spanish lottery. He had forgotten all about it, at the sight of loving faces and tender kindly eyes.

CHAPTER XIV.

'An enemy has done this.'

ALLAN did his utmost to beat down the thought of Muriel in his heart, but, to tell the truth, he utterly failed. It was in vain that he argued with himself that now he no longer had any right to think of her. He could not get over the thought that she had, in some way or other, been tricked into marriage with her present husband. He must fight his Fate. He would never marry. No one should ever take her place in his heart.

On looking out of his window on the morning after his arrival at Ardarrochar, he saw M'Evoy pacing uneasily up and down

on the gravel, casting occasional glances at the house. It was nearly eleven when he got up, and just as he was finishing dressing, a dog-cart dashed up to the door, and Jack jumped out. M'Evoy ran up to him, and said,

' Is it true, sir, is it true that he's come bock agen ? '

Allan went out of his room and down-stairs to assure M'Evoy of his existence. He stopped to greet Jack, whom he met coming up-stairs four steps at a time.

Old M'Evoy could say nothing. He took off his hat and tried to say something as he gripped Allan's hand, but the words would not come, and brushing away the tears that stood in his eyes, he went away cursing himself ' for a muckle loon that couldn't say a wurd to the young laird when he comes bock to his ain.'

Yes, there was a vast difference between sitting down to breakfast amid kind, loving faces, and serving the same to short-

tempered old gentlemen in a far-off land. The general was telegraphed for, and he replied the one word, '*Gout.*'

On the following day a letter came from him, saying that he had at least one foot in the grave, and up till now would have been uncommonly glad if the other would follow it as quickly as possible, but that, on hearing of Allan's arrival, he had determined to get well again, that he might have the pleasure of seeing him once more.

Sure enough at the end of a week he came, and was met by Allan. He looked ill and cross, but at the sight of Allan his face lit up, and he said,

'Thank God I have seen you again, my boy.'

The air of Ardarrochar, or the revulsion of feeling caused by Allan's return, had a good effect on the gout, to such an extent that by the end of January it was effectively routed, and the general, to his own astonishment, found himself on one sunny

afternoon actually helping to shoot the covers for the last time.

‘ You have brought me new life, Allan. I am seventy-seven next month, and I don’t think there are many old crocks of that age who can go a-shooting.’

Of course there were many talks about what was to be done about Blairavon. Mr. Hogson was told that he was to give up the shooting and the house in May: to which that gentleman answered by coming to Ardarrochar in person. He had an interview with George and Allan in the library at Ardarrochar. He was not a prepossessing person. His features did not belie his name. He came from Manchester. His language was free, if not insolent.

‘ You are the proprietor of the ’ouse, I believe,’ he said to Allan.

Allan bowed.

‘ Well, I don’t know if you think you are treatin’ me as one gentleman ought to

treat another. I took the 'ouse on the understandin' that I should 'ave it as long as I pleased, only on yearly leases. Now I took it for this year, and it is up in two months, and never a word do you say about it all this time. Now I hask you—is that treatin' a feller—I mean a gentleman—fair? Of course I thought that I was goin' to 'ave it again, and left 'ole 'eaps of pheasants, in consequence, hevery one of which I shall take away.'

Allan said he was very sorry, but that he had only just returned from Australia, and had not until now made up his mind to occupy the house once more.

' Well, I call it a regular plant. Where's a gentleman to get his shootin' from for next year? All the good things is snapped up now, and the next place I get maybe I shan't be able to make a penny out—that is, it may not suit me.'

Allan was sorry.

' Very well, sir. I shall let all Manches-

ter know this, and the next time you are 'ard up, as you bloomin' aristocrats usually are, you can whistle a pretty long time before you get a tenant out of Manchester. They know what's what in Manchester, sir.'

By this time Barton had answered George's ring at the bell.

'The door, Barton,' said George, and turned his back on the infuriated Mr. Hogson, who left muttering confusedly of aristocrats and Manchester.

'By gad, George,' said the general, when he was told of the interview. 'Old as I am, I should have kicked him out of the house.'

When Jack was told by Allan that he need no longer go to the bank (Allan suggested the Bar) he merely ejaculated, at first, 'Thank the Lord for that!' and then in a few minutes he went on,

'Look here, Allan, I have never uttered a word of complaint against the bank, be-

cause you took to your schoolmastering so well, but I say now deliberately, and I mean it, that of all the horrid meaningless slaveries on this earth, the occupation of a bank-clerk is the worst. A mere machine. I loathed myself at times when I thought that my life might be passed in adding up figures. In higher branches it may be better, but I tell you now that I would rather sweep a crossing in the streets than do that sort of thing any longer. It makes me mad to think that there are thousands and thousands of miserable wretches grinding out their lives at desks doing that mechanical work : it is one grade above copying work, and that is all. I know it has to be done, but such work ought to be given to cripples or Spaniards, or people otherwise incapable, it is no fit work for an English boy. Slavery is nothing to it.'

Allan was given to understand by Lady Grizel that, as her husband's cousin had

died, all her money would go to him, and that, in consideration of this, she wished him to take, for the present, a certain lump sum of money that she had saved from her large income. Allan saw that refusal was now impossible. Lady Grizel had set her heart on it, and it must be done. Moreover, he felt that in a certain degree he had forfeited his right to refusal. So in March it was finally settled that Allan should take up his residence at Blairavon once more. His income would be, taking everything into consideration, between four and five thousand a year, and later more than double that amount.

The rejoicings were great at Blairavon and in the village, when it was known that the young heir had come back, and was going to live with them again. A very conservative race, in this way, are the Scottish peasantry, in the Lowlands as well as the Highlands. They are affectionate

and loyal to the true lords of the soil, studiously polite and indifferent to the interloper.

Mr. Hogson had not impressed the villagers with his importance. In fact, they so far forgot themselves as to refuse to touch their hats to him.

Many people fancy that they can tell a gentleman at a glance, but they have not the intuitive knowledge that a Scotch peasant has on this point. A cockney or a street cad usually judges a gentleman by his power or will to distribute coin. This is nothing to an unsophisticated Scotch peasant.

In some parts of the Highlands, where its beauty and charm have been utterly spoilt by trains and by jabbering crowds of Yahoos labelled Cook's Tourists, the peasants are degenerating and becoming like their brethren across the border, and the time is not far distant, mayhap, when

it will no longer be an insult to offer a Highland peasant money for a favour done. Let us hope that it will be a long time before the miserable, shrieking steam-engine penetrates into the remoter parts of Caithness, Sutherland, and Ross-shire.

About a week after Allan's return to Ardarrochar, he had found a letter awaiting him. He picked it up and turned deadly pale. He knew the writing only too well. It was Muriel's.

With an effort he opened it. Not a line, not a word written: merely a cutting from a newspaper. We have seen it before. It was the announcement of his own death. He was very silent at breakfast, and afterwards he followed George into the library, and showed it to him. George read it in amazement.

'It is evidently genuine,' he said, 'and it is also, apparently, old. It is curious that it was never copied into the Scotch papers.'

‘Well, you see, it only mentions my connection with Llanwch and not with Blairavon.’

‘I wonder if that old Vivian did it?’ said George.

‘No,’ said Allan, ‘I am certain he did not: Mr. Vivian is an honourable man, and everything he did with regard to me he did believing it to be for the best, and after all, George, he was perfectly right from his own point of view. The only thing that I ever thought was unfair, was that he would never give me a hearing.’

George gave a gesture of impatience.

The general had not then arrived, and George and Allan agreed that it would be better to keep the matter a secret between themselves. Allan had not long to wait for an explanation.

Towards the end of April he had a letter from Thomas which ran:

‘I am a dying man. I don’t know whether you are again in England. I sent

a man out to the Canary Islands to track you, and he brought back the report that you were dead. I knew he was lying at the time, but, being then capable of anything in my desire to marry Miss Vivian, I had the report published in the *Mwnwmyn*, which I knew would not go out of the county ; the result you know. Miss Vivian is now Lady Pauncefoote, and I—well, the doctors say I cannot last two months. Say you forgive me. I should die happier if you did. I would never have willingly wronged you, Innes, but there are some things stronger than ourselves.'

Allan was tempted. All day he fought with himself. Here was the man who had ruined his life. Let him rot without forgiveness. Finally his better self prevailed, and in the evening he wrote off to say that he fully forgave him, adding that any blame in the matter must lie on his own shoulders, because he had always had the opportunity of letting people know he

was alive, and had never availed himself of it.

Allan never knew, and never would know, that by tacit mutual consent his name had never been mentioned at Ardarrochar for six entire months before he reappeared. They had all practically made up their minds that he was dead as no answers came to their letters, and the money in Australia was untouched. Lady Grizel alone held on in hope. She could not think of him as dead : the idol of her life. Amy's little song had been the first, even indirect reference to him for six weary months.

Allan took up his new duties with vigour. In the middle of May they were in the old home again, and it was almost with a light heart that he gave his orders, and made arrangements to farm the home-farm himself, in order to give himself constant occupation. But there was an air of sadness in his face which nothing could

dispel. He rarely smiled, and when he did, it had none of the brightness which used to be his chief charm in other days.

Mrs. Innes was happy. She forgot the months of sorrow and anguish in her joy at Allan's return, and the duties which she had naturally relaxed in her straitened circumstances, came upon her with renewed pleasure.

M'Evoy, with George's sanction, came back to his old duties, and the place generally assumed the air which it had wanted since Richard Innes's death.

Two years previously the old minister had died, and the villagers had taken upon themselves to elect his successor without consulting the temporary occupant of Blairavon. Hitherto they had always left his selection to the laird, who told them for whom to vote. On this occasion they had had many candidates, and after long and careful investigation, discussion, and

listening to sermons, their choice had fallen on a young man about thirty-two. They said he was ‘airnest.’ Possibly he was. He had no other recommendation. He was asked to dine at Blairavon, to be looked at: a very trying ordeal for a preternaturally ugly man, but I suppose in some cases necessary.

The minister came. He had fiery red hair, and a red moustache. He spoke with a broad Glasgow accent when he did speak, which was rarely, but he ate as only a hungry divine can eat. He was the son of a furnaceman at Govan: he had been shot into the Church because he was ‘airnest.’ An excellent person, no doubt, but he was not at his ease in a drawing-room. No amount of persuasion could extract anything further than ‘Nae doot, sir,’ and ‘Awctually that’ from him. He was continually opening his lantern-jaws and shutting them again, as though he meant to say something and had suddenly changed

his mind. He had an underhanging lower lip, and had, or thought he had, something the matter with the palms of his hands, for he never ceased to squeeze them together, save when occupied in eating. When he had gone, Allan heaved a sigh of relief, and said to his mother,

‘A terrible person, mother dear. Perhaps he is better in the pulpit.’

On the following Sunday Allan found almost the entire population of the village waiting outside the church for him, and he passed through a lane of honest, pleasant faces, into the little porch which led up to his pew. As in many churches in Scotland, the ‘quality’ sat in the gallery, their servants occupying seats behind them. The church at Blairavon was built in this style. Opposite the pulpit there was a large pew like the royal box in a theatre, let into the wall, belonging to the Earl of Strathconan, who had a country-seat in the neighbourhood. In front of the pew, the

Strathconan arms were blazoned in gold and blue and red, just like the sign of an inn. At either end of the church there was a small gallery, in one of which was the Blairavon pew, and in the other that of the Rawlinsons. All three had been without their rightful owners for some years.

The advantage of these pews was that one could look down upon the minister below and see if he was reading a new or an old sermon, or whether he was using one of those at two-and-elevenpence-half-penny the dozen ; also when he was coming to an end, and various other interesting matters.

The remainder of the congregation could also take their cue from the upper pews, in matters difficult of comprehension, and judge by the faces of the laird and those with him whether to approve or disapprove. But occasion for this was rare, as in Scotland, as the veriest child knows, a

sermon's excellence is gauged solely by its length.

Mr. Stevenson, or Stevison, as the villagers called him, looked, if possible, more uncouth in his black gown and bands than in ordinary dress. He improved the occasion by preaching for an hour and twenty-five minutes on the return of the Prodigal Son. He also thought fit to give the prodigal son a pretty rough time for about ten minutes, but he softened towards the end in a way which made those villagers who were still awake wag their heads. Allan thought it excessively bad taste, and went to sleep (which was also bad taste) after three-quarters-of-an-hour.

‘A graund sairmon,’ it was voted, but the afternoon-service suffered considerably in consequence; not because they were tired of hearing Mr. Stevison preach, but because they had consumed their entire supply of peppermint-drops, and it being Sunday all the shops were closed, and few

men would have the hardihood to face church without their ‘sweeties.’ So they sat about in knots, talking of the return of the laird.

Allan was slightly annoyed at the minister for preaching at him, but he was still more annoyed that the people had chosen such a terrible man for a minister. He was only thirty-two, and looked healthy, and might live for ever.

On the following Sunday matters came to a climax as far as Allan was concerned. After the congregation had droned out the one hundredth Psalm, about six bars behind the precentor, who had finished the psalm and had closed his eyes and his book preparatory to the invocation before the sermon, (when the rest of the congregation were entering the last lap—I mean, the last line,) Mr. Stevenson rose, and said,

‘ Ma freends, I propose this morning to impart a little instruction to ye on the

subject of the Airrk ! There are several things that require explanation aboot it, and I will see if I can't give ye a little light on the subject. First of all, we hear that there was but one window in the Airrk, but I have nae doot that any deficiency in light was well supplied by candles or gas in the back rooms——'

Allan got up hurriedly in his place and left. This was too much. He met his mother and Jack and the general, who was staying for a few days at Blairavon, at the edge of the park. As they came in, Jack cried,

‘ Why did you leave, Allan ? It was much better fun afterwards.’

Allan said, angrily,

‘ The man is a disgrace to his profession. I shall never go inside the church again, if he is preaching.’

The general wanted to know what was the matter.

‘ Didn’t you hear, general ?’ said Allan.

‘No. I didn’t. To tell you the truth, I never listen to sermons on principle. I used to listen when I was young, but I always used to think that I had heard it all before, only better expressed.’

‘I shall try to get rid of him at once,’ said Allan.

‘Don’t, my boy,’ said the general, ‘there are worse.’

At the end of June, Allan read in the paper that Sir Lionel Pauncefoote had died at his residence, 299, Park Lane, after an illness lasting six months.

When he read it, a very curious feeling came over him. At first it was one of unutterable joy, to be followed by gnawing doubt. He said nothing about it to anyone. In fact, the subject of his engagement had never been mentioned. He did not know what to do. At first he thought of starting for London at once, and going to claim Muriel. But then she had just lost her husband. Perhaps she would not

care to marry again. Doubt, despair, every feeling of joy and happiness all came tumbling in one on the top of the other. He was absolutely at a loss what to do. Should he write? No. Not yet. He would wait. For a month or so, Mrs. Innes saw that a happier expression had come over his face, and that he was occasionally to be heard singing snatches of old songs. But soon the state of anxiety in which he was in began to prey upon him terribly, and his face resumed the same expression of dogged determination with a shade of sadness which he had worn since he came home.

As the weeks wore into months, and no sign of any sort came from Muriel, he began to get desperate. He remembered that when she nearly fainted in London she had merely said, ‘Forgive,’ and she had made no explanation when she sent him the notice of his death. Perhaps she no longer loved him, but was thereby

merely justifying her action in marrying. He imagined to himself all the impossible things that a lover does imagine when everything does not go exactly as he wishes it. Perhaps he ought to make the first move. If so, he must wait till her year of widowhood was over. No. There could be no false modesty between them now. They had suffered too much. If she wanted him, she would ask him to come. But autumn deepened into winter, and no sign came.

CHAPTER XV.

'The shadow passeth, when the tree shall fall,
But I shall reign for ever, over all.'

MRS. INNES began to be alarmed about Allan. He worked with such fierce eagerness that she was afraid he would become ill. He would get up at five in the morning and go down to the home-farm and stay there the whole day, with short intervals for breakfast and lunch, and after dinner he would retire into the library, and write till his eyes were dim; he never hinted at what he was engaged upon. He only wanted distraction. Anything to take his mind off the subject which he was powerless to subdue.

‘ You really must go to bed earlier, Allan dear, if you get up so early in the morning. There can be no use in your going down to the farm so early in these dark, winter days.’

‘ If I am not there, mother,’ he said, ‘ nothing will be done. I want to know if farming cannot be made to pay well. I am sure it can if one only takes the necessary care.’

Mrs. Innes sighed and said,

‘ If I had not the assurance of knowing that you were here, my dear, I could almost fancy that you had never come back. I see so little of you.’

Allan kissed his mother fondly, and said,

‘ Forgive me, mother, I am selfish I know. I am trying to fight down something which refuses to be conquered. Perhaps I shall soon win, and then possibly you may have too much of my company.’

Mrs. Innes smiled and said,

‘ When that day comes, Allan, I shall think that I have lived long enough. Shall we have anyone here at Christmas, dear?’

‘ Well, mother, I almost think it would be nicer to spend the first Christmas in our old home together. Next year I intend to have two or three large parties of old college friends for the grouse-shooting, and I daresay that that will be enough entertaining for you for some time.’

‘ Lady Grizel will come at least.’

‘ Oh, yes, she doesn’t count—that is, I regard her as one of us. Where is she now, mother?’

‘ She is at her place in Cheshire. Shall I write and tell her to come?’

‘ Please, mother.’

Allan felt that he was incapable of entertaining anyone in his present unsettled condition, so he worked on, trying by sheer physical exhaustion to drive out of his mind the image of Muriel. Of one thing

he had definitely made up his mind, and that was, that at least until many months had passed, he could not make the first move as regards her. It must come from her, if she still loved him. Poor Allan ! At this time his doubt and uncertainty were nearly driving him mad. It was better, far better, to be assured of loss, than to be in a condition of continuous doubt. He almost brought himself to imagine at times that Muriel had forgotten him. Destitution in Australia was nothing to this.

On the anniversary of the day on which he had landed in England it was snowing heavily, and was bitterly cold, and Allan came in from the farm to breakfast, and turned over his letters, and saw, forwarded from the Isthmian Club, the letter for which he had ceased to hope.

He went into the library after breakfast and opened it. At first he could not bring himself to read it. He fancied anything,

everything. A polite reason for throwing him over, perhaps : asking him not to expect her to allow him to renew their former intimacy. At length he picked it up and began to read.

The first line reassured him, but he read to the end. It ran thus :

‘ MY DARLING,

‘ I may have, in your opinion, forfeited all right to call you by that name ; but I cannot, I will not wait any longer without writing to you to offer some justification for what, in your eyes, must appear a wanton breach of faith. I do not wish to palliate my offence in any way. I want to tell you the bare and simple facts, and I will rest content with your decision, be it what it may. Ah, my love, they tell us of a life beyond the grave, which to some is happiness, and to others one long, unending round of anguish and

sorrow. This may be so, but there is also a life on earth which is worse than death.

‘ When you had gone, a feeling of hopeless despair came over me, such that I thought I no longer cared to live : but my great love for you sustained me, and I said, “ He will come again, I will wait, I will wait, I will marry no other man,” and I would have waited, Allan, yes, I would have waited till my hair was grey and my eyes were dim, if I knew that after all you would come again, and that we should spend the few remaining years of our life together. At first, despite the dull, aching pain in my heart, I was content. At least, I was alone with my love, and I could sit and dream that you were by my side, and I was happy in the thought of your return. And then came a time when they wanted me to marry a man of whom, now that he is dead, I will make no mention. You knew him, Allan, he pretended

to be your friend. I told him that, so long as you lived, no power on earth would make me marry anyone but you. My parents, devising what they thought to be my good, were harsh and unkind, but I could bear that, I had your love to sustain me. Then came a day on which I found that little piece of paper in my room, which I sent to you. Allan, you can never know the utter despair which filled my heart, when I read that. I had lost all love for my home, and I had only you to look to. God alone in heaven will know the wicked thoughts that came into my mind at that time.

‘ When the first dulness of despair had worn away, I could not bring myself to believe that you were dead. I did not feel it in my heart, and this encouraged me. I said, “ If he were dead, surely I should know. I should have some sign. I should feel that the cords of my heart had snapped.” For were you not more

than half my life ? For six months more I was at peace—I was estranged from my parents. They treated me as a wayward child, but they did not trouble me. Then your quondam friend came once more. Again I told him that I would never marry him, and in all human probability that I should never marry at all. I tried to be kind to him, Allan, but I could not. I was weary of waiting for you, and I only wanted to be left in peace. Peace ? That was gone for ever. I do not complain. Now that you were dead, my parents could not see any reason why I should refuse to marry a man so desirable in every way. Do people when they grow old forget the wild love of their youth, I wonder ? Since I could not have you, I did not care to marry anyone at all.

‘ Allan, I think that during the next few months I had almost forgotten God. I merely wanted to get away from home. I did not care whither. One thing I could

not do, and that was to marry a man whom I disliked and despised, all the more because I connected him in my mind with your departure. Then came a letter from Sir Lionel Pauncefoote, asking me to be his wife. Allan, my darling, if you can no longer love me, at least forgive me. Think of my misery, my despair. I said to myself, when my father was reading the letter to me, "Here is an opportunity of escape." He is old, he is rich. I need never come back to the home which, for more than two years, has been more irksome than a prison." Oh, Allan, forgive me, I was wicked. I sinned against my conscience and against the memory of you. I said I would marry him. I had been married two days when I saw you here in London. That very evening Sir Lionel took to his bed, and never left it except for the grave.

' Here I have told you truthfully all

that has passed since that sacred evening in August so long ago. Allan, you are strong, and good, and kind. When you read this, say you forgive. I was weak, I was wicked : but oh, remember that I was alone, fighting my fate alone, and remember that a feeble woman cannot resist the strong tide of misfortune like a man. Allan, my darling, I love you, and have loved you always with the same undying love. You may think me unwomanly, presumptuous in writing thus to you. No. The sorrow and bitterness through which I have passed, make all conventionalities as nothing in my eyes. When you left me, Allan, so long ago, you were poor in wealth. I know not whether you are still so. I ask you, now that I am rich in everything that this world has to give of worldly wealth, to share it with me. Do you love me still? Will you marry me now that I can offer you everything that

most people long for? Not that *that* will be any inducement in your eyes. For you are not like the common run of men: you could not perjure your soul for gold. Do not hesitate for one moment to refuse if you have lost your love for me. I have deserved it; and if you do not come to me I will try to tread my weary path alone. I have sinned; I am but a woman.

' I write this without one little feeling of what it would be folly to call immodesty. I can trust you, Allan. If I am willing to trust you with my life, it is surely a little thing to trust you with a secret which, if you can no longer love me, I am assured will never penetrate beyond the limits of your honest heart. If Fate never suffers us to meet again on earth, I will claim you before high God in heaven.

' Good-bye, my darling. I shall wait one month for your answer in my house here: if no answer come, or if the answer come that I should deserve, then I will

wander away to some far land to bury my sorrow in silence and pray for kindly death.

‘ MURIEL.’

Would he come? Would the sun rise according to his wont on the following day? What was the opinion of the world to him or Muriel after what they had gone through? In two minutes he was deep in Bradshaw, and I am afraid consigned the various railway companies which run trains to the north to everlasting perdition because he found that by no means could he reach London before the following morning. A special train would bring him in to London too late to go to see her. He contented himself with stamping about the house, and consulting his watch at least ten times an hour. Surely this was the longest day he had ever spent in his life. Had the sun stood still? He had waited three years and a half, and yet a lifetime

seemed to be crowded into the time which he had to pass before he could start for Ayr to catch the night-mail. At luncheon-time he told his mother very quietly that he was going to London for a few days, but that he would be back before Christmas. She became very uneasy in her mind, seeing his restlessness, but wisely kept silence.

At last he was in the train. He forgot all about dinner. Would the journey *never* end? A voyage to Australia was nothing to it. He arrived in London at half-past eight. He had a bath and shaved, no breakfast, and was into a hansom by nine.

‘ 299, Park Lane. Half-a-sovereign if you get there in twenty minutes.’

The cabman got his half-sovereign.

He was at the door. What is this? A feeling such as he had never experienced before. Was he afraid? No. He felt giddy with excitement. After all those months

of gnawing despair, sickness, degradation and grief, he was at last going to attain the object of his life. He stood full three minutes before he summoned up courage to ring the bell.

A solemn butler appeared, and with a solemn voice said, before Allan could speak,

‘Mr. Allan Innes?’

‘Yes.’

‘My lady will see you, sir.’

Allan mounted up the thickly-carpeted stairs behind the solemn butler, whose steps were slow and stately as befitted such dignity. The butler noiselessly opened the drawing-room door, looked round the magnificently-furnished room casually, and said,

‘My lady is not here, sir, I will tell her,’ and he closed the door quietly.

Allan looked round the room, and then into the little drawing-room beyond, and there he saw—Muriel, sitting near the win-

dow with her fair face resting on her hand, as she leaned on a table placed beside the window. The rays of the morning sun, struggling through the smoke and fog of London, fell upon her sheeny golden hair. Allan gazed for one instant, and then walked noiselessly over the carpet, knelt at her feet, and said,

‘ Muriel, my love, I have come.’

CHAPTER XVI.

'There is nought better than to be
With noble souls in company,
There is nought dearer than to wend
With good friends faithful to the end ;
This is the love, whose fruit is sweet,
Therefore to bide therein is meet.'

You will see that there is not much more to be said, but we may as well say it.

At half-past one the solemn butler came in to announce luncheon, and not by even so much as the raising of one articulate hair in his eyebrows did he betray surprise, displeasure, joy, or amusement at the fact that his respected mistress had been in conversation for four hours and a half with

a young gentleman, to him hitherto unknown. He said to Muriel, in a tone of enquiry,

‘ Mr. Innes will stay to luncheon, my lady?’

‘ Yes, Smith.’

Allan was disgusted to find that such a magnificent creature was called Smith.

In the afternoon Allan went to call on Lady Grizel, who had come to town for a few days, previous to her journey to Scotland.

She was at home when Allan called.

‘ My dear Allan, what brings you to London? I had a letter from your mother yesterday in Cheshire, to say that you were at home, and wanted me to go there for Christmas. Of course I shall come, my dear. Have you come to fetch me?’

Allan merely replied,

‘ I am going to be married, Lady Grizel.’

‘ Allan! To whom? When? Where?’

And without giving me the slightest hint about it. Oh, Allan, it is not fair.'

' You are the only person in the world who knows beside my *fiancée* and myself. Would you like to see her ?'

Lady Grizel looked at him for an instant as though she were expecting him to produce the lady of his love from his over-coat-pocket, and then said,

' Of course I should, dear. Whom would I rather see ?'

' Come then,' said Allan, moving towards the door.

' My dear boy, do give me time to put on a bonnet and a jacket and a pair of boots.'

Allan laughed and said,

' I forgot that.'

In a few minutes she came down.

' Shall we walk or drive, Allan ? Is it far ?'

' Drive,' said Allan, ' the house is in Park Lane.'

They walked up to the end of the gate, and passed a beggar-woman who was shivering on the pavement.

‘Don’t give her anything, Allan. She drinks terribly.’

Allan paid no heed. The woman scowled as she saw Lady Grizel. She knew that there was no hope in that quarter, and was just preparing to give vent to some exceeding choice language about ‘them as walks in sattings and furs, and never ’as a copper to throw to a pore ole ’ardworking ’oman,’ etc., etc.—you know the style—when Allan did the very most foolish thing conceivable under the circumstances : he turned and gave the woman a sovereign, whereupon the curses were turned to blessings, and the even more objectionable cant about God rewarding him came instead. The snivelling language of your professional beggar, who can work and will not, is revolting. It is hard to say whether their blessings or their cursings are more re-

pulsive. It is bad enough to hear from the lips of an English beggar, but if you are anxious to have the full benefit of unctuous cant, let me recommend you to present a Spanish beggar with a peseta.

‘Muriel, my darling, let me introduce you to Lady Grizel Somerton.’

Lady Grizel looked for a second at the imperial figure that rose to meet her, and then she put her arms around her neck and covered her face with kisses.

‘Now I have a daughter too,’ she said to her. ‘I was never blessed with any children of my own, but it is better so : I think I could never have had the same affection for them as I have for Allan here ;’ and she laid her hand upon his shoulder as he stood beside her.

I think we can leave these three dear souls together for a little.

Three days before Christmas, Mrs. Innes had a telegram from Allan saying that he

was coming up with Lady Grizel that night, and would she have two extra bed-rooms prepared. ‘I wonder who he is bringing? a college friend probably. Well, it doesn’t matter: he can bring the whole world if he likes, so that he only come himself.’

At eight o’clock that evening Mrs. Innes, who was listening, heard the carriage wheels crunching on the gravel, and went to the door to welcome her guests. To her amazement a lady got out after Lady Grizel, who had run up the steps to greet Mrs. Innes and passed on through the hall into the drawing-room.

Allan gave Muriel his arm, walked up the steps, and said to his mother,

‘Mother dear, I want to present to you the future mistress of Blairavon.’

‘You are not married?’ gasped out Mrs. Innes.

Allan smiled and said,

‘Not yet.’

Mrs. Innes kissed Muriel tenderly with tears in her eyes, and said,

‘Come, my dear, and let me look at you —you must be frozen with cold.’

In a few minutes, Muriel and Lady Grizel went to dress for dinner.

Mrs. Innes, passing out after them, whispered to Allan, who was holding the door, his face all aglow with pleasure,

‘Is she the right one, Allan?’

‘Yes, mother.’

‘Then I am content.’

Perhaps all this is very irregular and improper. The exact necessities of chaperonage are obscure. What could you expect under the circumstances?

The rules of society, which are based upon the supposition that no man or woman is pure by nature, are as nothing when human happiness is at stake. Happiness being a commodity which is, as a rule, dealt out in exceedingly small parcels, one cannot afford

to throw any of it away, or risk the possibility of losing any. Here were two passionate human beings who had gone through a living death for four years, and nature herself was crying out that they should be united, and no one can obey a better mother if he guide his impulses by reason. Perhaps Muriel ought to have waited a stated time, not a minute more and not a minute less, and then eaten out her heart, if Allan's foolish pride had not let him come to her. Bah! one can see Mrs. Grundy holding up her hand in pious horror.

Confound Mrs. Grundy !

During these happy days at the end of the old year, and the beginning of the new one, Allan's farm suffered somewhat from inattention. In fact, the enthusiasm for agriculture had been swallowed up in an enthusiasm for something nearer and

dearer to him, which ‘something,’ moreover, reciprocated his enthusiasm, whereas the farm did not. In fact, Allan had seen almost from the first that it must be a failure. The land lay too low, and, moreover, was of poor quality. He was no less selfish than other young men who have had the good fortune to be in a similar position to that in which he was now in. Mrs. Innes and Lady Grizel had at this time to endure rather more of each other’s society than was actually necessary.

Allan and Muriel would wander down to the ruins of the old castle in the cold, moonlight nights after dinner, and leave Lady Grizel and Mrs. Innes to themselves. Well, well! Love will never grow old, they say. Cold and rheumatism were trifles compared to the pleasures of whispering meaningless wordlets in the ear of the one you love, with no listeners save the immemorial elms, and no witness save

the silent moon. The moon, nightingales, and insanity were all invented solely for the benefit of happy lovers, 'tis said.

George and Amy had come rushing over from Ardarrochar, on learning from Allan that Muriel had come to stay with his mother. George, seeing the old light in Allan's eyes, and the old smile on his face that had made him fall in love with him unconsciously sixteen years before, gave a whoop of delight, and had nearly wrung Allan's hand off, and in many other ways behaved in a manner exceedingly derogatory to the dignity of a baronet, and possible member of that most sedate body, the House of Commons.

Had some of his supporters seen him during the first day of his stay at Blairavon on this occasion, they would have shaken their heads and tapped their foreheads meaningly, and muttered under their breath—‘incipient lunacy.’ Had a Radical

constituent only seen him, there would have been broad hints in the *Ayrshire Revolutionary Times*, with its delicate and refined wit, to the effect that Sir George Anstruther was a raving maniac, and that it was fortunate that this slight blemish had been discovered before he had had the opportunity of entering the House, to join the other, though less dangerous, maniacs on the Conservative benches.

The general had been written to. He was in the South of France. He replied that he was coming to the wedding, but was afraid he would have to dance on his head, as at present he was being wheeled about in a Bath-chair, with both his feet as big as pumpkins.

But there was no dancing after Allan's wedding. Muriel wanted to be married very quietly in London; it was arranged that the wedding should take place at the end of April, and that they should go

abroad for two or three months, and then entertain a large home-coming party in August.

So the world turns upside down.

Eighteen months before, if anyone had told Allan that he would be wealthy, happy, and married to the lady of his love, he would have said that—well, that the person who made that remark was not as truthful as the famous President of the United States. Somehow or other, when a man of birth and education finds himself in the position of a waiter, one would think that his future life is hardly shadowed forth as one long round of delirious bliss. And yet so it was with Allan : but he was a man, and a man can endure many things. Muriel's fate had been harder. She could do nothing. She had been powerless to resist the weight of persistent unkindness, which was meant for her good. And then she had taken a step to save herself from it, and two days after-

wards had discovered that she had thrown away her one chance of happiness in life. And now. Well, anything is durable, if the longed-for consummation of one's hopes only come—though late—at last.

There was a very quiet wedding, only Mrs. Innes and Jack, now a student for the Bar, George, Amy, and Lady Grizel being present. Then they went to luncheon at Muriel's house in Park Lane, and in the afternoon started for France. Muriel had wanted to go to Canary (which, by the way, is much pleasanter in summer than in winter), but Allan had a rooted objection to the place, as being chiefly the cause of Muriel's taking a step which she would never cease to regret. After three delicious months of wandering in pleasant places in other lands, they came home in the beginning of August, and a few days after the party assembled to celebrate their home-coming.

During Allan's absence the other wing of the house had been finished (for Allan was now a wealthy man), so that the castle now was capable of holding a small army. He had tried to collect all his old college friends. He had not forgotten Wilson and Bright and Prettyman in his happiness. Wilson at first would not come, he said that he had completely dropped out of all the usages of modern society, and that he was afraid he would only act as a wet blanket. But Allan insisted. So he came, and passed perhaps the happiest week since he had left school, years ago.

Bright, with his childlike smile was happy in that he saw that Wilson was happy, and so far forgot himself as to address two entirely unsolicited remarks to Muriel. After which performance, he blushed deeply and obviously gave himself a long lecture on the vice of forwardness.

The general arrived last, hearty and

well, looking more like fifty-eight than seventy-eight, and as full of boisterous spirits as a boy, and Allan began to have doubts as to the genuineness of his gout. The party was complete. They all sat down to dinner that night in the great dining-room at Blairavon, with the Inneses of days gone by smiling or frowning on them from the walls. A merry party. It was distinctly understood that nobody was to make a speech. Speeches might recall days of sorrow which had better be buried in oblivion. The minister was there looking like a fish out of water ; he did not speak—he ate. The general, who had taken Muriel in to dinner, threw prudence to the winds ; he ate with the appetite of a boy, and showed a rashness and complete indifference to gout in the way in which he gaily drank champagne, hock, sherry, and claret.

It was with alarm that Allan saw him

rise in his chair, when the servants had left the room, and Muriel was on the point of rising to go into the drawing-room.

He rose with a glass of claret in his hand, and said,

‘ I know that no one is expected to make a speech, but I am going to claim the privilege of a very old friend and relative of our host’s, and take the matter into my own hands. I am always making speeches. I can’t help it. I am a very old man, much older than many of you young fellows may think, and it is the fashion nowadays to consider an old man as an old fool. That may be so, but at any rate an old man has the advantage of a vast experience to look back upon. I see my friend Maginnis there is wondering what the deuce I am driving at, he always is wondering at something—let me recommend you never to get into any sort of argument with him—he is dangerous.’

Maginnis laughed, and put his glass (not his wineglass) in his eye and listened.

‘Now I daresay that you will all wonder what on earth I am making a speech for. Well, the reason is this : I see that, with one or two exceptions, everyone at this table is in the springtime of life. I want to say this to you. Our host, whom I regard as a very lucky man, and his lady’ (bowing to Muriel) ‘have gone through a very trying crisis in the last three or four years, and they have their reward. I want to say this : that looking back on my life and remembering the many instances in which I have seen it get its own reward,’ (the good old man was getting a little mixed,) ‘there is only one thing worth doing in the world—and that is—your duty. It is no use sitting down by the road and whimpering. Well, I rose to make a speech, and—er-er—here I am making a d—— I am sure I beg your pardon, my dear,’ turning to Muriel.

‘Why, general, you did not say anything to apologize for.’

‘Eh, what? well, I meant to, then. Well —er—the fact of the matter is that that was not what I meant to say at all; at least, I did mean to say that, but I rose with the intention of proposing the health of our host and hostess, and may they live long to enjoy it.’

After the enthusiasm had subsided, all eyes turned to Allan. His heart was too full to speak. He tried, and failed. Then he rose again, and saying, ‘In my wife’s name and my own,’ he drained his glass and sat down.

When all the guests had gone to the upper regions either to bed or to smoke, Allan waited a little, and taking Muriel by the hand he led her back to the dining-room. He picked up a small lamp as he went, and standing opposite the coat-of-arms above the mantelpiece, split right across

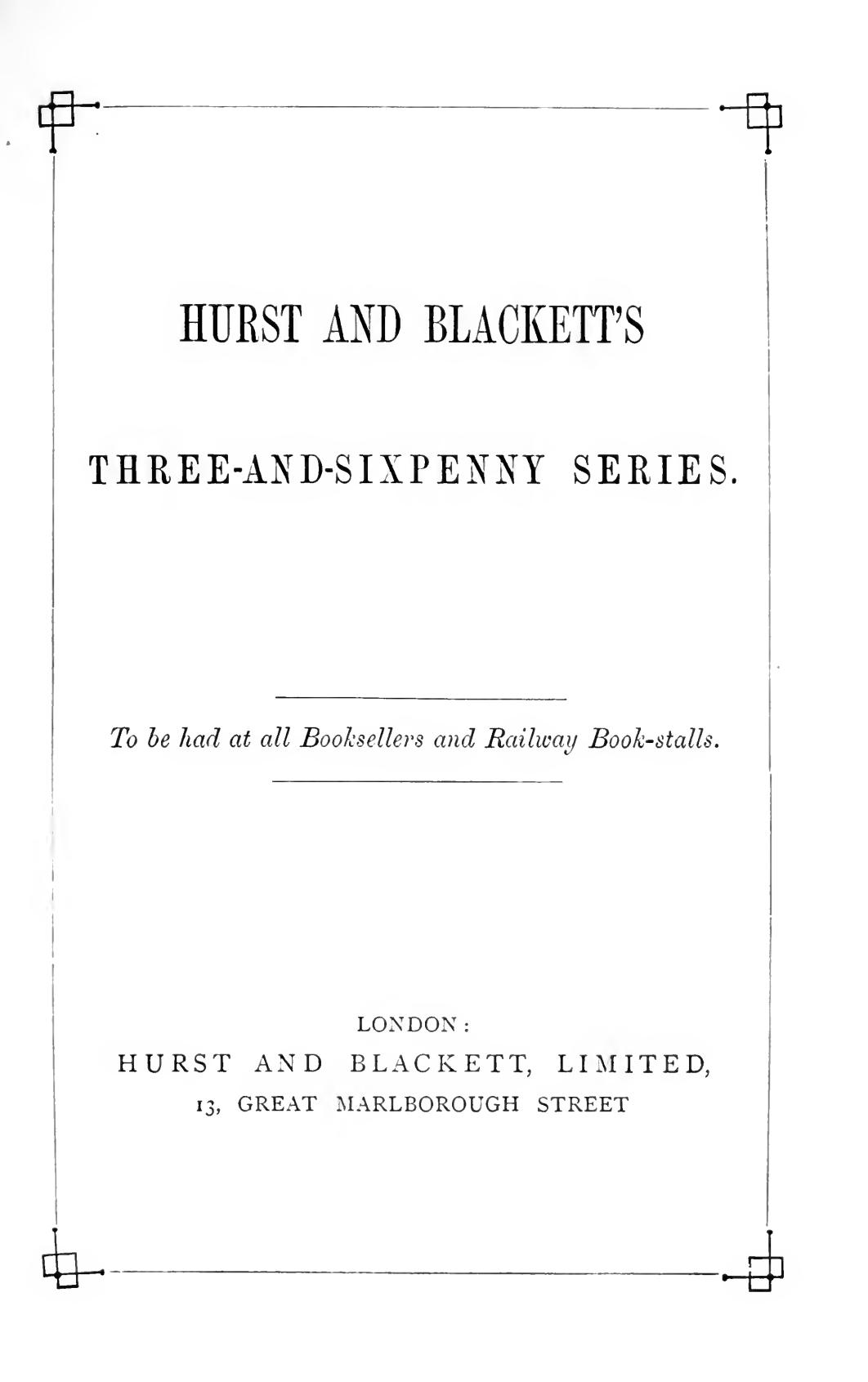
as it was, he pointed to the motto and said,

‘ I have told you what that means, my darling. It has always made me sad. With you has dawned a new era for our house. Our luck has changed. I am going to change the motto of our house to “ Erimus,” for surely now our troubles are over and a new day has dawned for us.’

Muriel turned and kissed his cheek.
Here we will leave them to wander hand in hand through life until they pass ‘ to where beyond these voices there is peace.’

THE END.





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"The Ides of March," in spite of its classical name, is a story of the present time, and a very good one, full of lively conversation, which carries us merrily on, and not without a fund of deeper feeling and higher principle. We will not forestall the story, only saying that the surroundings of the hero, consisting of unconventional yet thoroughly nice people, are excellently drawn, and that the author knows when and how to give us a wholesome laugh."—*Guardian*.

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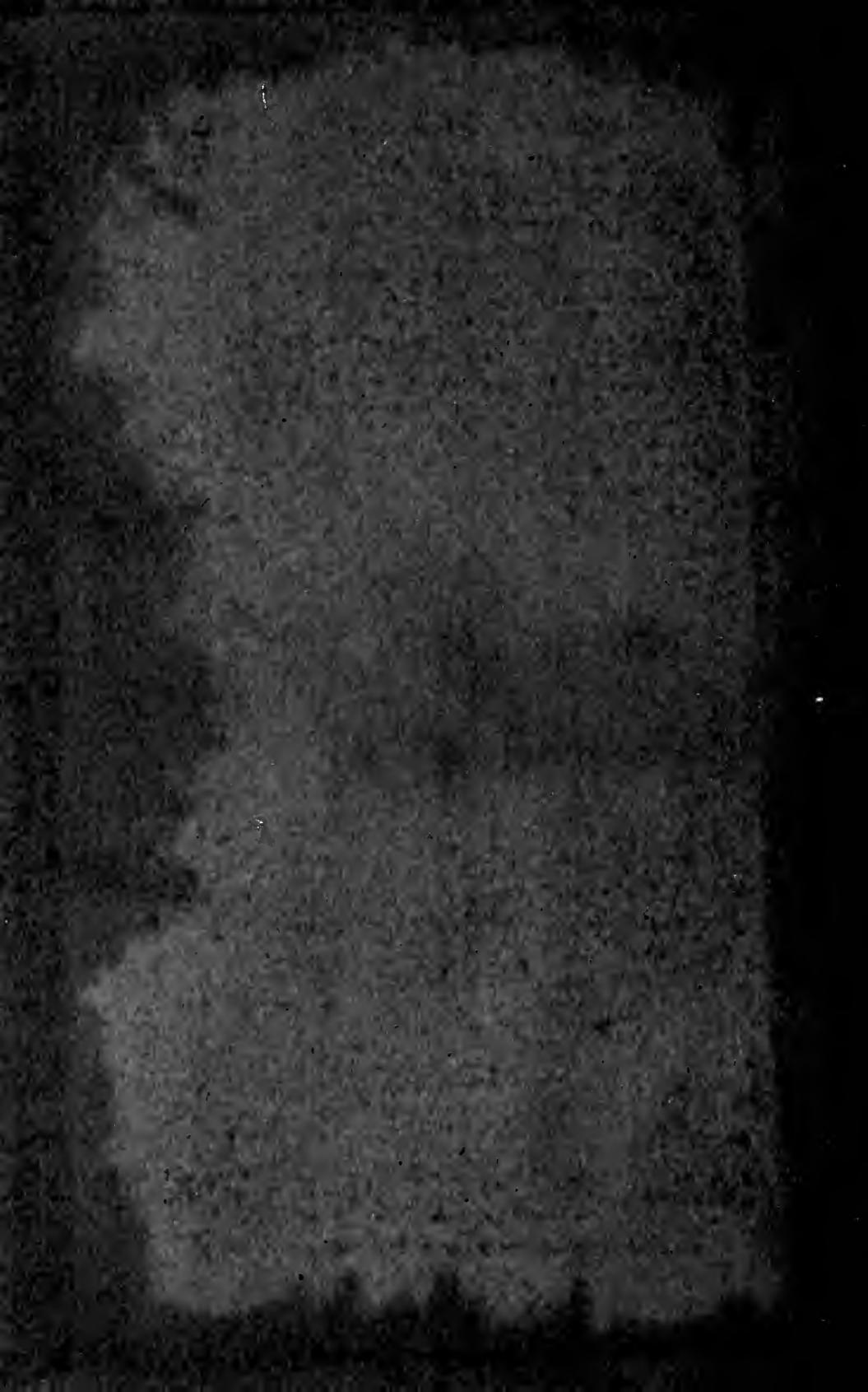
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